

# 나와 호랑이 남



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# 나와 호랑이 님



# Me and the Tigress - Volume 01 Chapter 01-03

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# Illustrations

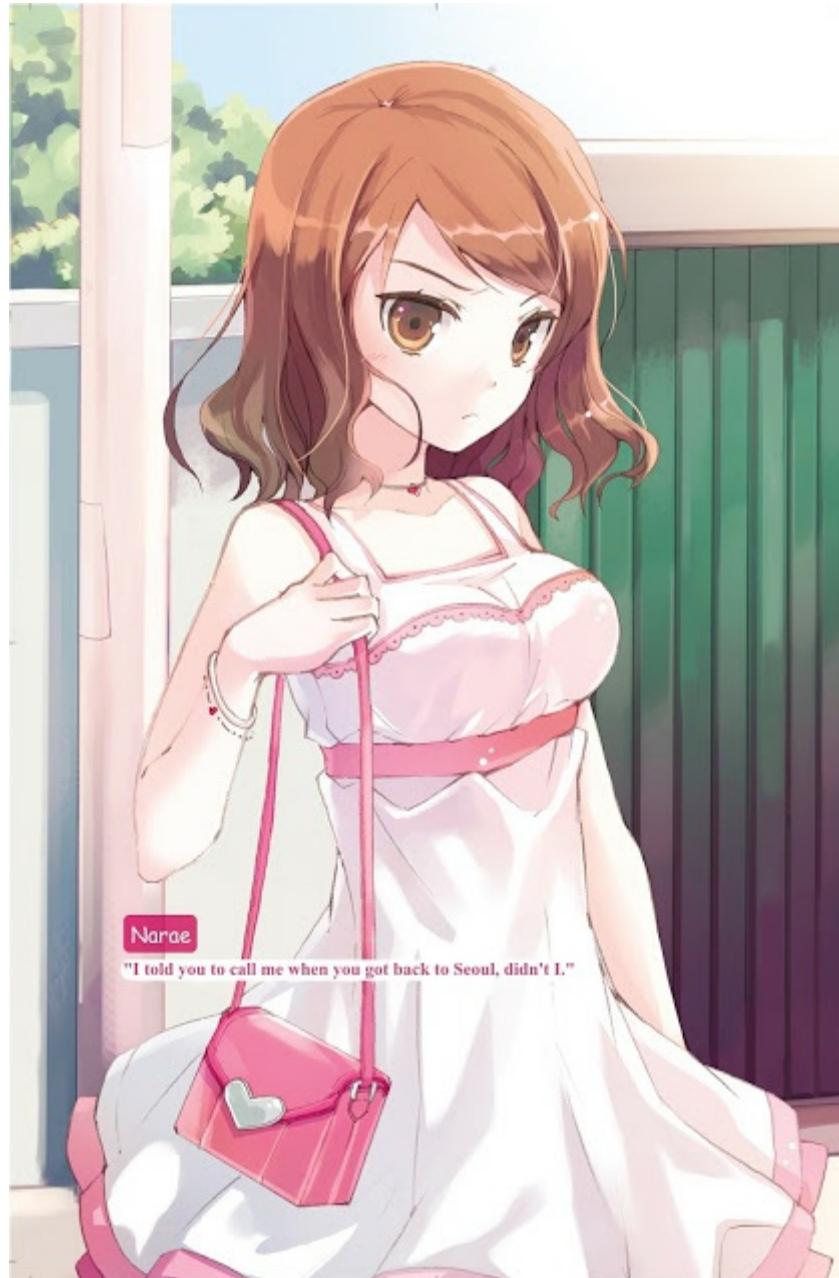


**Author: Kanel (카넬)**

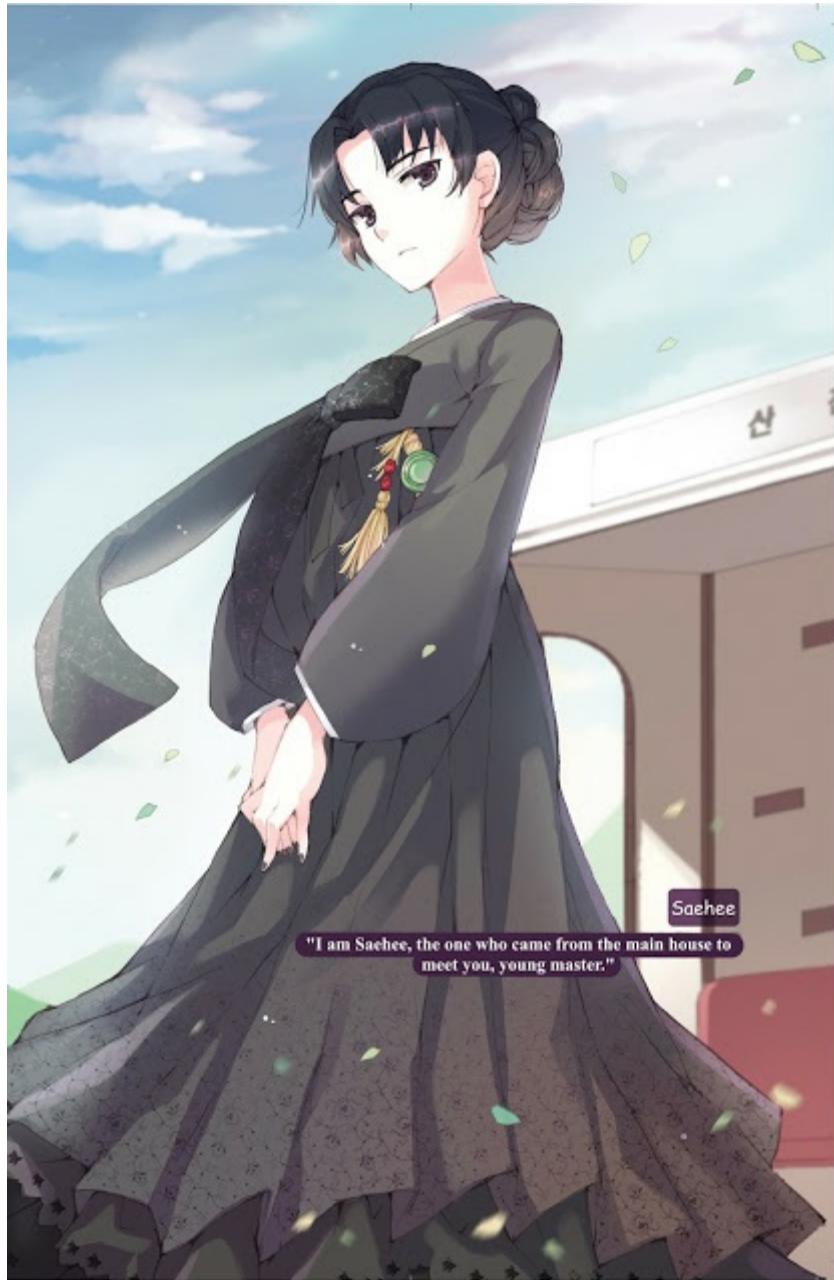
**Illustration: Young-in (영인)**



Rangii: "You said I'm pretty! This is the first time I heard that!"



**Narae:** "I told you to call me when you got back to Seoul."



**Saehee:** "I am Saehee, the one who came from the family estate to meet you, young master."



**Baduk: "Please pet my head~!"**

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# 01. Starting Story

The first chapter! No, this isn't an April Fools Day thing!

*Translator: Dijon*

*Editor: Narane*

A word from the translator:

*Hi readers, I'm Dijon, the translator, and I have a disclaimer to give. My Korean is not good, but my English is perfectly fluent. In other words, I am incredibly sorry for any translation mistakes. Also, there's a manhwa out of this. In light novel terms, chapters 0-28 are volume 1, 29-70 are volume 2, and 71-ongoing are volume 3. So if you're okay with spoilers, here's the link:*

[http://bato.to/comic/\\_/comics/my-love-tiger-r14598](http://bato.to/comic/_/comics/my-love-tiger-r14598)

*This light novel is a ridiculously long series, so don't expect any closure in the near future.*

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## 01. Starting Story

Everybody must have felt their heart beating out of their chest. Like when showing your parents the worst report card ever, or when the evil boss you fought against whom you thought was a complete stranger said "I am your father," or when the girl you liked turned out to be a boy.

Now in a situation where my heart's beating hard, I too understand. Since I'm giving the confession of a lifetime. My life will change based on how this confession goes.

The target of my confession, the slightly arrogant and dignified Miss Seo Narae, stands before me. Our class president and my childhood friend, she's the girl I

like. Her shoulder length, half-curly hair is waving, and because of her sharply rising eyes that made her look a little fierce, it was easy to tell her personality. Which was to say...

“The hell is it? If you want to say something, spit it out already!”

“Ah, sorry.”

She gets angry easily. Of course, I understand Narae’s feelings. Class was over and she was going with friends to play when I, of all people, grabbed her and brought her to a secluded place behind the gym. Folding her arms and looking nervously at me, I know for sure that her mood was bad.

But Narae. Don’t pose like that. It makes your already-huge breasts stick out even more. If you compare her to our other classmates, the other girls looked almost pitiful compared to her explosively large... .....What am I thinking about right now?! Get yourself together, Kang Sunghoon. Aren’t you the one who was just childhood friends with Narae, but are now upheaving your relationship with her?

With a confession of love?

“Hey, Narae.”

“What?”

Na-- Narae’s always gotten angry easily, so don’t be intimidated by her cold response, *me*.

“.....Um, the thing is--”

One step. I just need to take one more step! Keep it up! Being unable to confess here means you’re not a man! I have no time to spare. Look! Narae’s so angry now that her face turned red!

“I-.”

It was then.

[♪♪♪]

A familiar cell phone ring tone cut off my words.

“Just, just one sec.”

I was cursing the caller to become impotent for generations for that damn timing when I found it was actually my dad, so I stopped.

What the hell is it? Does he want me to hurry back and make food for him?

“What--.....”

[You need to hurry back home.]

“I was going to go in just a bit even if you hadn’t told me to.”

[There’s an urgent matter. Come home now.]

He doesn’t know his own child’s circumstances. Because I got upset I also unthinkingly replied,

“What the hell is it?! The side dishes are in the refrigerator, I made rice, you don’t need to do the dishes, I also did the laundry, ironed the clothes we’ll wear, threw away the compost when I left, and the newspaper’s on top of the dining table!”

.....I was shocked to remember that I was still in front of Narae. She was still there, looking at me with pitying eyes. Since she knows full well of my domestic

circumstances. Because mom doesn't come home often because of her work and dad's a patient with uncommon laziness, our family situation is that I have to do housework in their place.

For now, I should hang up on this damn father. But dad continued, blowing away what I'd assumed he was going to say.

[Ah, it's nothing special. Just that my dad died?]

Dad's dad. In other words, my grandfather?!

“.....Eh?”

[So hurry back home. I'm hanging up.]

“Dad? Oy, Dad!!”

The only return was the segmented beeps of the phone.

“What's going on at your home?”

“No, that's.....”

Obviously something's wrong. Is it okay to tell Narae about it? After worrying a little, Narae quickly turned her head and spoke bluntly.

“Fine. It has nothing to do with me anyway.”

She may be saying that, but she's definitely inwardly worried. Others may misunderstand her often, but Narae's fierce appearance is different from her truly caring personality. I fell in love with her because of that side of her. And as vacation starts today, I wanted to make my confession of love, but..... Now doesn't seem like the right situation.

“Narae. I’m sorry, but I have to go now. I wasted your time after you made time for me, so I’m really sorry.”

“What, all of a sudden?! And after you went and called for me!”

Ah, she’s really mad. If I leave without saying anything, I’ll probably pay for it later. It couldn’t be helped so I explained my situation.

“My dad just told me my grandfather passed away..... So I have to go now.”

Although, from the time I was born until now, I haven’t seen him once.

“Ah.”

Narae understood my situation and nodded her head and spoke in a depressed voice.

“Okay. You can go.”

“Sorry.”

“But are you going to the countryside now?”

I’m not really sure, but,

“I guess?”

“Then contact me when you come back to Seoul.”

“.....Eh?”

Why do that? After I asked, Narae’s face turned bright red and she shouted.

“St--stupid! Do you think I’ll just let you off free after wasting my time?!”

Ah, so that's it. Is she trying to cheer me up?

"Ah, then I'll apologize to you properly then."

"And send me a message when you arrive in the countryside."

".....What?"

"If I said to do it, just do it! Why're you talking so much!"

But all I said was "what."

"What, you unsatisfied?!"

Eek. Narae must have shouted because she read my expression. After knowing each other for so long, she can understand what I'm thinking even without me speaking. I spoke while keeping both my hands in the air.

"Not at all."

"Then message me!"

"Yep, understood."

I said bye to Narae and headed home.

"Go by yourself."

Dad instructed, as absurdly as the idea of him doing chores around the house.

Ah, before that I should simply explain our household situation for you to fully understand how I feel.

Right after Dad graduated high school, he cut off all his ties with his family and ran off to Seoul. Because of him, I've never seen any family on my dad's side. And telling me to go by myself to give my condolences is what you're telling me to do, Dad. After you said that, did you expect me to say "yes, I understand?"

"And what about you, Dad?"

"I'm not going to go."

"Even at fifty years old, you're stubborn like a child."

Even at fifty years old, his fists still stung.

"I can't just go back after running away. But you should go, since you're his eldest grandson"

"You're his eldest son, Dad."

Wrinkles formed around his eyes as he spoke.

"Since when did you start constantly talking back to me?"

"You didn't know? I just started today, Dad."

It seems like adults often don't acknowledge that their children have grown up. Rather than try and persuade me properly,

"If you don't want to go, then get out of the house."

"Who does that?!"

"I do."

He likes to threaten others.

Thinking about it, I should've left the house right then. I should've also thought about why Dad ran away from home to go to Seoul. But without even a thought, I lost to Dad's threat and could only think about leaving Seoul as I got on the bus line headed for the countryside.

After riding the bus for 4 hours and getting off, I arrived in the eldritch world of... I mean, I found myself in Jirisan [\[1\]](#). Maybe because it's Jirisan, even the air itself feels different.

.....Right. It's hot. It's really hot. Seriously, it's so hot I might go crazy. Just the temperature itself isn't a joke. It's not that it's really humid, but even under shade it's hot. Even the breeze is hot. I didn't know that was because of the bus's air conditioner, but what in the world? Aren't mountains supposed to be nice and cool? It may have been because of the crazy weather, but the terminal was completely empty. But, of all places, there was a beautiful woman there.

Looking to be about my age, she was pretty and gave off a cold appearance. But it was her attire, and the place she was wearing it, that immediately caught my eye.

She was wearing a modernized hanbok [\[2\]](#). The hanbok was uniquely beautiful, but while it was designed to allow the wearer to move freely and comfortably, that's right. It's good up to here. Be it wearing a modernized hanbok, a suit, a kimono, a China dress, or a traditional African outfit, that's all a part of her freedom. But it's a different story when the hanbok is completely black.

That's right. Black. Like a night with no moon or stars shining, the kind of black you see if you enter an empty room and close the door. No wait, looking in-detail

I can see a Norigae [3] on her waist and there's a pattern on the skirt, but this doesn't change the fact that the woman standing in front of me is wearing a pitch-black hanbok on this hot day, with an expressionless face, standing in the sun, and without a single drop of sweat showing.

At a glance, she gives the impression that she wants to become a mannequin. She doesn't give off the sense that she's a living human. Definitely a feeling that she's a corpse that was connected to an invisible string and set there. But I could see her chest heaving slightly so it seems like she's breathing; it must've just been my imagination. That's right. Instead of thinking about that, I should find a bus going towards my dad's family. I looked at my surroundings as I thought where could it be.

Then our eyes met.

A fearful chill strong enough to make me forget the heat for a moment swept through my back. That was just one of her footsteps, and it only got worse as she stepped closer to me. More than anything, her gaze was directed at me.

Is there someone behind me? I turned around and saw a bus with no driver in it. Ah, does she want to get on the bus early? I stealthily stepped away from the woman's path. Then she altered her course to head towards me. All while looking straight at me.

One sec. What is this. Is this strange woman interested in me? The one wearing a short sleeved t-shirt, long pants, and sneakers. The one carrying a backpack with several changes of clothes packed inside. Ah, is that it. Is it my face. Quite humbly, I have to say I am handsome. Although this is limited to my reflection in the bathroom mirror. And this isn't the bathroom.

At some point while I was thinking these dim-witted thoughts, she approached and faced me. Before I knew it? I hesitated, moved a foot back so I would be ready to run away if necessary, and spoke.

“Seeing that foolish face, I can see that you are the young master Sunghoon.”

I lost my initiative to those strange words.

“Um, who are you?”

Suddenly calling me “young master.” What is this woman saying?

“I am Saehee, the one who had no choice but to come here from the main house to fetch the young master.”

“If you’re from the main house, then you’re Grandpa’s granddaughter?”

Huh? Does this mean she’s a part of my dad’s side of the family?

“No one told me that someone’s going to fetch me here.”

Just then, my phone suddenly rang.

“Ah, excuse me.”

“Yes.”

I answered the phone as I asked to be excused. I can hear a familiar voice.

[Have you arrived?]

“Ah, yes. Dad.”

[I totally forgot to tell you, but the youngest said she’d go get you when I told her you were coming.]

Did you seriously not tell me. Rather, your what? Youngest?

“What?”

[Your youngest aunt is going to meet you.]

An ominous feeling enveloped me.

“And what’s her name?”

[Saehee.]

“And her age?”

[Now she’s 40? Or maybe 39?]

I looked at the woman in front of me. No matter how you look at her, she’s clearly not a 40-year-old middle-aged lady. Do they have the same name? If not, then maybe my aunt’s daughter? No, there’s no way she gave her daughter the exact same name?

[Ah, she’ll look a little young. She has a baby face.]

Baby face? If the woman in front of me is my aunt, then the baby face explanation..... doesn’t make any sense!

“Any special characteristics?”

[She’s expressionless, cute, speaks strangely and harshly, and she won’t seem like a human. You’ll know her when you see her?]

I’m looking at the woman, I mean my aunt, who is right in front of me. I made eye-contact and my head is spinning.

[Then do your best, my child. I’m expecting a lot from you.]

The call ended without a chance to talk further. He’s always been this kind of a dad. Now, well, it’s nothing new. More than thinking about Dad’s words, the

bigger problem is how this woman can be my aunt.

“Then shall we get going?”

Let's check. Since I honestly cannot believe this woman is my aunt.

“Back then.... what's your relationship to my dad?”

“That human trash would be my older brother.”

What could he have done for you to identify my dad as human trash? But now, rather than that, out of the many things I was told I feel there's one thing I have to say.

“But you're not my aunt, right?”

“Based on the family tree I am.”

“And what is your age?”

“I am 40.”

We have a winner. The prize is loss of sanity, failure of reason, and absurdity.

“What?!”

“The weather's quite hot. We should get going now.”

As if she didn't hear my reply, Aunt Saehee began to walk. For now I followed my aunt and opened my mouth.

“Today's definitely hot, right?”

No matter how much you're mourning, isn't moving around in those clothes

stifling? --Is what I meant, but,

“I’m fine. It seems only the young master is having a hard time like a mutt on the dog days..”

My aunt understood a little differently. No matter where you look at it, she had to be dying of heat compared to me when she’s dressed like that. That’s that, but as Dad said her words are really harsh. She’s not outright insulting, but I think I’ll lose it if I keep hearing her say stuff like that.

“But Auntie.”

She suddenly stopped walking. If I did something I would have crashed onto her back. Before I could ask why she did that she spun around, looked me in the eye with those emotionless pupils, and spoke.

“From now on please call me Saehee, young master. Also, there’s no reason for the young master to treat me with respect.”

“.....But you’re my aunt, so I should call you that.”

“Since I was adopted, I do not share a single drop of blood with you, young master. So there’s no need to call me aunt.”

If you suddenly say that it makes me never want to speak again.

“But still, because of your age.....”

“A woman’s age is just a decoration. Do you understand, young master?”

The first time I saw her smile-I was terrified.

“A woman’s age is merely a decoration. Since I’ve told you that please call me Saehee.”

“Ah.... Yeah.”

I shut my clueless yet energetic mouth and could only nod to au... I mean, Saehee's words.

“But have you always talked like that?”

“Is there a problem with the way I speak, young master?”

If you speak like that to a weak-willed person like me, there's nothing I can do but droop my tail.

Outside of the terminal I could see an expensive and fancy car waiting for me.

“Please get in, young master.”

I nodded my head and entered as she opened the back door with the ease of long practice and guided me in. I moved my butt over so she could get inside, but she closed the door. She went to the opposite side of the car and entered the car. Somehow, I felt like an idiot.

The car took off and she began to speak.

“Before we leave, there are several things I must inform you of. Is that okay?”

“Yes.....”

I twitched.

“Ah, yes.”

“First, Father’s funeral was a lie.”

She told me something totally unexpected.

“What?”

“My scumbag brother made the lie to get the foolish young master to come to the countryside.”

Let’s stop paying attention to the words she attaches to people. Be brave, me.

“Wait, what are you saying?”

“Father directly gave the command.”

.....Dad, I’m beginning to understand why you left his home back then.

“Then why are you wearing mourning clothes?”

“These are my normal clothes, not mourning clothes.”

This woman’s fashion sense is as distorted as her personality.

“Then, is grandfather at home?”

“No. When he heard the young master was coming, he went on an overseas vacation.”

Dangerous. I’m beginning to understand a little as to why Dad cut off all ties with his family. I want to go back home. But I’m already in the car, and there’s no way I can go there and say “it was nice to meet you. Then I’ll be going now~.” There has to be a reason for why they would lie about someone’s death just to get me here.

“Why did you call me here?”

Saehee gave me an incomprehensible reply.

“In order to keep the promise you made long ago with my master.”

“What promise? And who’s this master?”

“I cannot tell you right now.”

I asked her multiple times but she consistently remained silent. There’s nothing I can do.

“...Wait.”

I got my cellphone from my bag and called Dad.

[The phone is out of power. Please leave a voice message.]

He planned it, this guy. He planned it. Without a doubt he turned off his phone on purpose. Yeah, I’ll gladly turn my phone off too. I pressed the power button on my cellphone for a long time and then shoved it into my backpack.

“Then what do I have to do?”

“You just have to live in the residence for a few days.”

“Whaaaa-t.”

“I prepared everything you need beforehand so you do not have to worry about anything.”

“I am worrying about what you just said!”

“You can think of it as returning home.”

“My home is Seoul!”

“There is nothing more to tell you. Please excuse me until we arrive home.”

You've already changed from calling it a residence to a home? You've decided on that? I kept talking but she remained silent.

After 30 minutes of driving on the steep mountain road to deep in the mountains, I got out of the car and was greeted by cool air and a wall bigger than I could imagine. And also a massive gate. It was an old-fashioned, traditional house and it was incredibly big. Is my dad's side of the family rich? Looking at the massive wooden gate that seemed to belong in a historical drama or a folktale, I felt the sudden urge to shout “Come out.”

“Come out!” [\[4\]](#)

She said it. She really said it. Not me, but Saehee. As soon as she shouted, the gate opened inwards and someone came out to meet us....

“Welcome, young master!!”

I dropped my bag, turned around, and ran full force.

Dad, I think I know now. Why you left your home. And why you didn't want to go back. It feels like I might hate this house. Actually, I do hate it.

Dad. It seems that I've misunderstood you all this time. I thought that you were a geezer. But I thought wrong. Dad, you really grew up to be normal with a fine personality...

Considering that the household has a dog the size of a bus greeting its visitors!

A yellow dog, big beyond common sense, opened the door with its front paws, blew gusts of wind by wagging its tail, and spoke in human language. Being raised in such a house and becoming the way he is now, Dad must have been a very gifted child! Hahahahahahaha!!

What the hell is that!!

“Did you forget something in the car?”

She asked in a bored voice, and I turned my head towards her, surprised. Although I was running as hard as I could, Saehee was easily walking next to me.

What is this. It's weird.

“Were you surprised?”

I'm surprised even now.

“Did you think I wouldn't be? Haa, No wait, what is that? And what are you?! I, now, haa, running, haa, but, you?!”

“It's teleportation magic.” [\[5\]](#)

Who are you, Hong Gildong?! [\[6\]](#)

“And what, haa, is that?!”

“A phantom.”

“Phantom?!”

The wall between reality and delusion is collapsing. Is this a dream?

“Before that, suddenly moving on this hot day without warming up is not good for an unathletic person like the young master, so if you’ll excuse me.”

Without the chance to even ask“What are you excusing yourself for?”...

“Huh?”

She grabbed my waist with her strangely cold arms and I was lifted into the air, bringing me back in front of the large dog. In this ineffable situation, Saehee spoke to me as I was dazed.

“Welcome, young master.”

I wanted to pass out.

I sat down on the wooden main floor as Saehee, sitting dutifully in front of me, gave me an explanation.

It is said that in the beginning, the phantoms were born in chaos. The phantoms lived freely with their mysterious strength and some viewed humans as friends, some as food, and some as enemies. And to put an end to this time for the sake of humanity came Hwanung [\[7\]](#)

“....Why the Dangun myth all of a sudden?”

“This isn’t a myth, but a true story. And it is polite to wait until others are done speaking.”

Saehee scolded me and continued her explanation.

In order to open up this world for humans, Hwanung stood fast in his resolve to stop phantoms from harming humans. And by that resolve the two strongest phantoms, the Tiger and the Bear, sought to become his wife. And the tiger wasn't chosen because she ran away.

"Our master is that tiger. And our ignored master was sealed away by Hwanung and the Bear."

"That's too severe."

Getting sealed because she wasn't chosen. How could they do that so arbitrarily.....

"I think so too. She got sealed away just for trying to tear apart the mountains."

She's talking about a tiger, right.

Anyway, at the same time the phantoms were forced to live hidden from human eyes. Sometimes a crazy phantom that lost all reason would appear, but by borrowing Hwanung's power the humans made it so those phantoms were eradicated and could no longer be found on this earth. And Hwanung, the orchestrator of these events, lastly sealed the tiger away but by a moment of compassion, was said to make a kind of promise with it. It is at this point that I raised my hand.

"And what is that promise?"

Saehee didn't answer.

The tiger believed in that promise and quietly slept until now. After that a family was chosen to protect the seal, and continued that duty for generations.

"And that is why the young master was brought here."

I may be confused, but I still couldn't believe this.

“And Dad?”

“He cut off all ties with his family and fled from his responsibilities. If my scumbag older brother had kept his promise, the young master would not have had to come here.”

Dad, I did misunderstand you. You’re really just human tra--..., no, you’re still my dad, so I shouldn’t curse at you. Anyway, I’ve already experienced a situation beyond common sense so there’s nothing I can do but believe her.

“And what do you mean by protect? I don’t know such strange things.”

“That’s okay. The ability to protect it is in your blood.”

“If a person is supposed to protect the seal isn’t that bad for you guys?”

“No it is not.”

“Why?”

“It’s just a title, anyway.”

“....What do you mean by that?”

“We call it the protector of the seal just for convenience’s sake. For generations you were just observing the seal. They, like the young master, are powerless humans.”

It was just for a bit, but I felt embarrassed for thinking that I might have special powers.

“Is there anything else you are curious about?”

“So you’re saying that all phantoms are keeping their bodies hidden?”

“Yes.”

Is that so. In that case,

“What is that?!”

Until now I was intentionally ignoring it, but I spoke while pointing at the dog with its tongue sticking out and its tail wagging that was sitting in the yard behind Saehee. That’s right, a dog. It’s a dog, but a monstrously huge dog.

“It’s a dog.”

“That’s right, it’s a dog. A monstrously huge dog.”

“It seems you know quite well.”

“I don’t mean that! I mean, what the hell is it? Is that dog a phantom too?!”

“That is correct.”

“And you said phantoms are hiding?”

“It’s hiding even now.”

“Where is that?”

But the dog is scratching itself with its hind leg?

“Normal humans are unable to see it.”

“Could you not deny me my once-normal 17-year-old life?”

“Compared to an earthworm, the young master is closer to a normal human.”

Ah, I’m really thankful for that.

“Then why am I able to see it?”

“The protectors of the seal are powerless humans, but you are able to see it because, at a young age, a ceremony was conducted to open your spiritual eyes.”

I can assume that the spiritual eyes are meant to explain the power to see phantoms. But she said something about a ceremony. What the hell is that?

“What do you mean by a ceremony?”

“I cannot tell you right now.”

Is your catchphrase “I cannot tell you, please wait for now”? As I wrapped my head around what to do next and worried about how to get more information, this woman-- I already stopped thinking of her as my aunt-- turned around and spoke to the huge dog.

“Since it seems that the young master understands us now, please change into a human.”

“Okay!”

There was smoke and a bang! No, the bang didn’t actually occur, but it would have fit the mood. When the smoke cleared away, there appeared bobbed-up hair in an almost unnatural shade of brownish yellow, on top of the head were raised dog ears, and the girl had on a dirt-covered hanbok jeogori [8] and pumpkin-colored pants; she spoke while shaking her hands and speaking to me. She looked so young that it seemed like she should have been getting admitted

into elementary school. With shining eyes that fit her appearance, the dog-turned-child spoke.

“I’m Baduk! It’s nice to meet you, young master!”

Even as I am swept by her vigorous attitude and making me nod in response, I couldn’t hold back from asking,

“Are you that dog from before?”

“Yes!”

And one more question.

“....Who gave you your name?”

“Grandpa did!”

Grandpa’s naming sense is the best. [\[9\]](#)

“But young master. Is it okay to ask you for one request?”

Baduk went up to the house floor with shining eyes. I nodded my head, unable to betray those expectant eyes.

“Yeah.”

“Please pet my head~!”

Before I knew it, Baduk was stretched out on all fours and spoke with her chin on my thigh. When the hell did she do that? But until just now she was standing behind Saehee?

“Please do it~.”

I don't know if Baduk could see how embarrassed I was, but she implored me with the tail on her butt shaking from side to side. I was barely able to reply while keeping my composure in this situation.

"I know now that your name is Baduk and that phantoms exist..... how does that lead to me petting you on the head?"

Even while saying that, I was petting that girl's head.

Huh? Since when was I doing that?

"Hawooo---."

To say that I enjoyed seeing her close her eyes, her blush, and being sprawled out totally carefree... there's no way I could even think that. Pull yourself together. Yet even while thinking that I slightly touched that girl's ears. She flinched. I pulled on them with my fingers. They're warm. They're not like toys. They're real ears.

"Awuuu~. Our ears are our weakness, young master~."

Seeing Baduk twisting her body, blushing as she used my thigh as a pillow and rolling around, if time stopped as I found and stabilized my inner peace... no way I could say that. I shook my head from side to side. Seeing Baduk sprawl out nearly made me lose my mind.

"Then I shall continue my story from before."

Saehee started her story as though nothing happened. If everything that happened just now was a plan to calm me down, this woman must be a snake phantom.

"We all live here as a part of our master's household"

Since before I came here, there was something I kept wondering so I asked her one more time to make sure.

“That master you’re talking about is the tiger that was sealed away, right?”

“That is correct.”

“And I came because I had to protect the seal.”

“That is correct.”

“But there’s also a promise I have to keep?”

“You’re unexpectedly intelligent.”

What do you mean, unexpectedly? Anyone could easily comprehend your story without that crazy self-introduction in the middle.

“Then what the hell do you mean by a promise? Can’t you tell me now?”

I blurted out the question again after first asking in the car, but Saehee replied with something totally unrelated.

“Do you like hiking?”

Why are you talking about hiking all of a sudden? I’ll answer her anyway.

“I don’t hate it, why?”

“In order to answer the question you just asked, we need to move from here.”

“....Where to?”

“Into the mountain.”

....Great. Because things turned out like this, I want to know why I came here and why I met phantoms. I'm not the kind of person to cluelessly do as he's told. I brushed off my seat and got up.

“Let’s go.”

There are a lot of things in this world that I don’t know.

“Huff— huff— huff—.”

“It would be best for you to exercise more, young master.”

Don’t you think that you two are the weird ones?

It’s already been 40 minutes since Baduk and Saehee guided me where to go from the house. I’m not physically unfit. On a continuous uphill trek, the weird ones are Saehee who was easily climbing the uneven road, and Baduk who was animatedly climbing next to her feet.

“Young master. If you’re tired shall I carry you?”

I shook my head from side to side at Baduk’s words. Just look at yourself. How in the world could I ride on the back of someone with the appearance of a child.

“Just-huff- a little, let’s-huff, -rest.”

My back was already smeared with sweat, my legs were shaking, my breathing was ragged and my chin was rising and falling. Until now my male pride was keeping me going, but this is my limit. I can’t go. I can’t walk anymore.

“That won’t do.”

But Saehee cut off my words in one strike.

“Young master, you are walking slower than a turtle. We need to walk for 6 hours without rest to get there before the sun sets. If it becomes night, this will only become more tiring.”

We need to walk for 6 more hours. I raised my arms in surrender.

“I can’t go. I said I can’t go. Don’t you know that I’m a normal human?”

“My normal human father was able to make it there in 3 hours without a rest.”

What does that matter to me? I bet Grandfather could do that teleportation thing too, right?

Ah! Then, I thought of a solution that could end this situation. It’s really embarrassing, and I don’t want to do it twice, but it’s probably better to be embarrassed than have to walk for another 6 hours. No, it’s definitely better.

“Say...”

“Yes?”

“Uh, can’t you grab me and use teleportation magic to take me there?”

“Yes I can.”

A cool reply.

“Do you really want to do that? Even though back then you said quite confidently that we should go up the mountain?”

I just noticed. This woman hates me.

“It’ll be better than being so exhausted.”

“Although this displeases me, if you’ll excuse me.”

Saehee hugged my waist and picked me up.

“Eh? Young master. Can’t I carry you there?”

Baduk was next to me, incessantly shaking my leg. Saehee treating me like a parcel, or getting on Baduk’s back like a savage? There isn’t a dilemma. Even if you were to change to your original form, I refuse.

A 6 hour hike for me is a 10 minute walk for Saehee. Looking at the one who nimbly climbed the mountain without sweating a drop even while carrying a person, and at Baduk following with her tail wagging as if going on a walk, I could feel in my bones that these two really weren’t human. Suddenly curious, I asked Saehee a question.

“So what kind of phantom are you?”

“I am unable to answer your question.”

What are you, an online game admin? I gave up on asking any questions.

“We’re here.”

Saehee dropped me off at a huge cave entrance. At a glance, I could tell it was over three times my height and about 10 meters wide, and my jaw dropped. What in the world, was there such a big cave in Korea?

“Please enter.”

Saehee went in first. I followed behind her and entered when.....

“Wait. It’s too dark.”

Only travelling a bit, I had to stop. I entered the cave, but I couldn’t even see me feet properly. So I couldn’t properly walk anymore. Do I have to take out my cell phone? I stuck my hand in my pocket and, damn. I put it in my backpack and left it behind. Baduk came right up next to me and spoke as I was unable to do anything.

“Heh heh, then this time, I’ll help you.”

Before I could even ask “how?” Baduk-

“Uwak?”

I was thrown to the sky. What is this all of a sudden?!

“Com~bine!”

Baduk lightly leaped underneath me and put her neck between my legs and landed on the ground.

Can I just die?

“Wait, hey! This isn’t right!!”

A little girl smaller than me is carrying me on her shoulders. Thinking about this objectively, this is a laughable situation, but by my perspective I was so embarrassed I could die.

“Eh? Then, should I walk on my four feet so you can get on my back instead?”

“I hate that even more!”

Isn't that perverted? No wait, this entire situation is perverted!

"Then I'll go like this."

Baduk turned her head from side to side as she tried to look at me.

"Hey! Hey!! Don't, don't move your neck!!"

"Hawuung?"

Baduk tilted her head indicating she didn't understand, but there was absolutely no way I could explain the reason to her! How am I supposed to explain the reasons to handle with care when it comes to teenaged boys?!

"Just keep going like this!"

"Yes~!"

In the end, I just decided to give up.

Some time after Baduk was carrying me deeper into the cave.

"The master's seal will break in a few years."

Saehee suddenly told me that. Suddenly hearing her voice so clearly surprised me, but what was even scarier was the meaning of what she said.

"What'd you say?"

Are you telling a man that a phantom who was dumped and had a huge tantrum is going to be freed?

"So much time has already passed that the seal is reaching its limit."

“Then if that seal were to break what would happen?”

“Master would probably eat you first?”

Baduk said such a scary thing with an innocent voice.

“Please don’t worry. Our master does not eat food that will make her sick.”

“And who’s the food?”

“Of course, our master wants to keep the promise so there is no reason for her to do so.”

I was concerned about the promise ever since before. But,

“Can’t you tell me what the promise is that I have to keep?”

“I am unable to tell you myself.”

Saehee closed her mouth again.

A long time passed as I was unable to see a thing. Then I saw a soft light in front of me.

“We are almost there.”

At Saehee’s words, I tapped on Baduk’s head and spoke to her.

“Let me down.”

“I’ll go just a bit more.”

“No, I mean for the sake of my innocent sensitivity, please put me down.”

“Hawuung?”

Baduk’s body language showed she didn’t understand, but she let me down anyway.

“Thank you.”

For now, since Baduk succeeded in getting me here without injury, I should express my thanks.

“Heh heh~.”

Baduk laughed happily and thrust her head towards me with her tail wagging. It’s that, right? I petted Baduk’s head.

“Hawuuuu.”

Her ears were even pricking up.

Saehee’s walking towards the light. And the light is slowly getting brighter, and I kept walking until I discovered what was in the middle of the light, at which point I stopped and my mouth hang loose, speechless.

A tiger the size of a mountain was sleeping.

White fur, close to silver in color, with talismans stuck shining and illuminating the cave and black stripes were swallowing that light. The white tiger, even lying down, was exerting an overwhelming presence.

“Words can’t even...”

For such an unreal sight, I wasn't open-minded enough to go "Ah, that's right. Of course that kind of a tiger exists. If there's a dog the size of a bus, who says there shouldn't be a tiger the size of a mountain? After all, the world is huge! Hahahaha-." My two legs were firmly implanted onto the ground and my eyes couldn't peel away from the giant white tiger. But really, that's a tiger? As big as a mountain? One that looks like, if that thing stood up, it'd tower over huge apartment buildings?!

"This is our master. Please do not lose your mind, young master, and move forward"

But Saehee grabbed my hand and dragged me forward. Baduk was pushing me from behind.

"Wa, wait! I need to prepare my mind!"

"How much time will you need?"

I thought hard at Saehee's words.

"70 years?"

"You have 7 seconds."

Hey, that's too short.

"Your time's up."

"Uwak?!"

As I was being dragged to the tiger that was big beyond belief, I was overwhelmed and amazed all over again. The fur was shining and silvery, the curves on its body made like Goryeo porcelain. And,

“.....”

“.....”

With pumpkin-sized and thin pupils bigger than my head, it felt like it was capable of casting spells on people no wait did it just open its eyes? It just opened them!!

“I came with the young master, Master.”

Saehee spoke as she politely dropped to her knees. Baduk fell to the ground and exposed her belly, showing an expression of obedience.

“I have arrived, Master.”

“So you’re here.”

But the tiger’s eyes were only directed towards me. Should I pee myself? Or have my legs tremble? Go insane? But out of all those choices, my one action was,

“The tiger spoke!!”

I pointed my fingers as I shouted, and I thought even then that this was an idiotic act. The tiger revealed its teeth as it laughed. I just hoped that its smile didn’t mean “I feel like eating human meat for lunch today.”

“Why are you so surprised? Is my ability to speak that weird?”

Honestly, your existence in and of itself is weird.

“Yeah.”

Why in the world did I naturally speak so informally? Maybe it’s because I was so scared. Or maybe I got used to acting like this because of Baduk.

“You’re quite bold and honest.”

If you throw away common sense, then those concepts will become meaningless.

“That’s right, boy. Do you know why you came here?”

“I came here to fulfill a promise, but I don’t know what that promise is.”

The tiger directed its gaze at Saehee.

“So you didn’t tell him.”

“I felt it would be best for Master to tell him directly.”

“Is that so.”

The tiger looked back at me.

“You look alright with coming here without being given a reason.”

“The shock of all this is so big that I look okay. So, let’s start over from the beginning.”

“What do you mean?”

Instead of answering I took a deep breath and cried out loudly.

“Run for your lives!”

I turned around and ran with all my strength.

.....They brought me back.

“It seems you were raised to be a delightful child.”

I sat with my legs folded in front of the tiger after getting captured, and spoke in submission.

“I was raised normally.”

The gigantic tiger bared its supernaturally large teeth as it laughed.

“That’s right. But still, you are here to keep a promise between us from long ago.”

This tiger! What are you saying to a person who doesn’t even know what that promise is?

“Shouldn’t you explain it first? I said this before, but I don’t know what that promise is.”

The tiger’s avoiding my eyes. Ah, it forgot what I said. It’s obvious.

“Then I shall tell you.”

After going ahem as if readying its voice, the tiger growled lowly as it spoke.

“The one who placed this seal on me left me with one prophecy. When this seal would yield to my strength and I would be freed, a man to be my husband would be sent to me.”

“.....What?”

“And if I fall in love, even if the seal is broken they swore to never bother me again.”

“.....What?”

At this, I looked pointedly at Saehee, the one who dragged me back here, for an additional explanation.

“That is what Master thinks it is.”

But Saehee skillfully avoided answering with those words. I wanted to ask for more, but the tiger opened its mouth and I decided to listen for now.

“Now the seal upon me is weakening, and after a few years I will be freed without effort. And this generation of protectors includes a boy who I have laid my eyes upon. I suppose this could be called fate.”

“Excuse me? What are you saying?”

“My husband who has been blessed by the heavens. I am saying that this man is you.”

I can't hear it, I can't hear it.

“Ahhh, I have waited so long for this day. Finally I can receive love.”

“Um, I can't understand what you're saying right now.....?”

“Do not worry. Although I have lived for a long time, I have never allowed another man to lay his hands upon me.”

Do you really think that that's what I'm worrying about?

“So let's have a wedding.”

“Like I said, who will?

“Who else but you?”

“.....Eh?”

“You are the wonderful man to be my husband. You are quite handsome and raised to have a nice personality. In other words, you were raised lovingly by the heavens.

Your appraisal of me is too generous.

“So, when would you like the ceremony to be?”

Someone’s really jumping the gun here.

“Um, I never said I’d marry you though?”

The second I said that, the air within the cave changed. I guess this could be called a mourner’s house? It suddenly felt as if my shoulders became heavy.

“Are you saying you hate me?!”

“That, oh, I’m sorry, but our differing species create an insurmountable wall?”

“So you’re saying you cannot accept me because of my animal form?

Even if that tiger is surprisingly speaking the same language as me?

“That’s right! It may be possible to overcome differences ethnicity, culture, age, and gender, but a difference in species is too much! Because I’m a human...”

As I kept talking, I realized the truth. Even now there was a little girl lying at the feet of the tiger. Her name is Baduk. Whose real identity was... a massive dog!

“Is that it? Then if I become a human, everything will be fine!”

“No, that’s not it!”

I was too late. The once massive tiger’s body became covered in white smoke, and there was a girl’s appearance appeared..... Ara? Something’s weird?

“So it’s okay as long as it’s like this?”

Without a chance to get my thoughts together, I could only look at where the tiger disappeared and at the talking little girl who was looking up at me, and I was able to return to reality. That’s right. She was looking up at me while she was speaking. The tiger that was bigger than a mountain before it disappeared was nowhere to be found, and in its place was a cute little girl who looked to be in the third grade!

A mysterious looking girl with tiger ears pricking up, a tail elegantly shaking, and silvery white hair tinged with black stripes acted as a replacement. Excluding her hair that was hiding her flat chest and other embarrassing areas, in other words, she was standing proudly even while in the same state as she was when she was born. That’s right. She’s naked.

Why are you talking so coolly! You’re naked! Completely nude! You took off all your clothes?! When Baduk changed shape she had on a hanbok, so why are you totally naked?

“Achoo-. Human bodies really are delicate. Just from this slight cold-achoo! Uuuu, it’s cold.”

Of course it’s cold. Even if it’s summer, did you think being naked while being deep in a cave wouldn’t be cold?

“You, where are your clothes?”

“Hm? Why do I have to wear such bothersome things? And why are you saying such things now? I had nothing on since the beginning.”

So she's a nudist.

Of course, I can understand the tiger's words. Since animals don't need to wear clothes. But if you transform into a human you have to wear clothes like a human!

"That is because the naked body of the opposite sex cause excitement, Master."

Saehee, who until now remained a passive observer, brought up an unnecessary subject. At her words, the tiger had a smile of satisfaction on her face as she took a step towards me.

"Is that so?!"

And another step. My eyes were dazzled at her pure-white skin.

"You're....."

Another step.

"Aroused by me!"

The tiger that was approaching right up next to me... or rather, the little girl that took its place, hugged my waist. From what I could feel beyond my clothes, the little girl's body heat and her slim chest on my hips were causing me to be..... Sorry, it wasn't actually arousing. Although I was in a situation where a naked girl was stuck right onto me, I remained strangely calm. Rather than girl, I suppose I should just call her a child? Or maybe it's because I know her true form is a tiger. Or perhaps because strong, older sisters are more to my taste.

"No, I'm just embarrassed to see you like that."

I took off the t-shirt I was wearing,

“Do you want to have our first night in this place? Of course, I’d like to, but I need to prepare myself.....”

While spouting nonsense, I spoke to the reddening tiger.

“Hands up.”

“Hands up?”

As the tiger raised her two hands, I sneakily clothed her with my t-shirt. Even to me it was decently sized and it exposed one of the tiger’s shoulders, but it perfectly covered her down to her thighs so it’s good.



Yeah, it's good. With this, I was relieved from her overexposure. Let's just be satisfied that she's only half naked. But, showing that she didn't understand my nice feelings, the tiger puffed out her cheeks and displayed her dissatisfaction.

“Why are you making me wear this?”

“Human's sexual preferences are such that rather than being totally naked, having some covering is.....”

“Hey, don't say weird things.”

“So you like it like that, young master?”

“I don't.”

“If my husband is a man with these kinds of tastes, then it is my duty as a wife to accept them.”

“I said I don't!”

What the hell do these people think I am?!

“So now that I've taken the form of a human, are you content?”

The tiger looked up at me with eyes full of expectation. Her gaze looked as though she was going to play a fun game with Baduk, who was right next to Saehee. But in the tiger's gaze, I could feel that something was different. Although I don't know what that is, although I really don't know what that is. Although I don't know other things, I could tell that this girl... was nervous.

So rather than rejecting her directly, for now I'll change the subject.

“I’ll just ask one question.”

The tiger nodded her head.

“Why me? It’s a little embarrassing to say this, but to me, you’re pretty. You could get lots of other men if you grew up a little...”

“You said I’m pretty! This is the first time I heard that!”

The tiger blushed deeply, embarrassed.

“Really, are you trying to make me embarrassed?”

“Hey, hey. You. You’re missing the main point of what I was saying. And if you’re nitpicking over being embarrassed, doesn’t it make more sense to be embarrassed about being naked?”

“How much longer until you answer my question?”

The tiger was clearly excited as she answered my question.

“Because long ago, I fell in love with you at first sight.”

“But this is the first time I’ve ever seen you.”

“Although you don’t remember, you came to see me once to open your spiritual eyes when you were a newborn.

...Could that have been the ceremony? The tiger reminisced while looking far away and talked.

“Until then, all children felt an instinctive fear and cried when they saw me. But you were different. Even after seeing me, you smiled widely and gave me a hug. As you suckled upon my breast, you fell asleep on my bosom.”

But I can't remember. I can't remember being such a brave child.

"At that time, I felt we were fated for each other. This child to be my husband was above comparison from other children. You are the partner I was waiting for. Look here. Even now, you are confidently standing in front of me. In this place where my powers are large, no other human could stand so confidently as you do."

I looked at Saehee.

"It's the truth, young master. Even now, Father cannot raise his head near the Master, and the scum humans who looked upon the Master fainted. The only exception is the young master's mother."

Ah, if it's mother, then I can understand. Since she's always been that kind of person. I have heard that I took after my mom a lot. All that aside.

"But today is the first time I've ever seen you. Suddenly saying we should get married doesn't make any sense, right?"

A question mark appeared above the tiger's head. No, I'm not joking and it's not a figure of speech, it's real. A number of strands of hair stood up on her head and formed a question mark. To be able to move her hair so freely, even if she's taken the form of a child, she's still a phantom?

"Why are you like that? Your parents gave their blessing and I have been unable to see the face of my partner for so long, isn't it obvious?"

What planet are you from?

"Ah, is that it? Do not worry. When we were performing the ceremony, your mother already gave her blessing for our marriage agreement. By your species' standards, I have already been accepted by your family. So it's obvious that our marriage would happen."

Mother, just what the hell were you thinking? You thought about marrying your son off to this phantom. That's too much.

"That may have been obvious in the Joseon Dynasty [\[10\]](#), but times have changed. I have no intention of marrying someone I don't like."

Because there's someone else I like. Although I didn't confess to her yet. But marrying a phantom I've seen for the first time. That's nonsense.

"...You don't like me?"

Struck by my words, the tiger looked up at me. Her eyes became downcast and her mouth lowered, making me look like the bad guy. Uuu, I wavered at the sight of a tiger who looked like she was about to cry and answered her as I turned my head away.

"How am I supposed to like you if I just met you today?"

"...Is, is that so."

The tiger looked as though she was hurt by my words, her face frozen, and then she lowered her head, depressed. Her tiger ears on her head also drooped naturally. Although my words were backed by common sense, I couldn't help but feel guilty. But I can't back down. Because I could feel in her gaze that she sincerely wanted to get married with me. Married to a phantom at the age of 17, one that's a tiger as big as a mountain! How does that make any sense?

...But right now in front of me was a crestfallen little kid. Even knowing I was speaking in a straightforward manner, I tried to comfort her.

"Well, someday you'll find a partner who likes you too, so don't be too depressed."

“There’s no way that’ll happen.”

But what came back was a cold denial.

“After being rejected by you, I’ll stop seeking love.”

Are you planning on labeling me the worst man in history?

“No, there’s no need to do that.....”

I shut my mouth.

I had goose bumps. Ominous energy emanated as if it would kill every living being. And in the center of that energy: the tiger. A girl.

“If my fated partner isn’t you, nobody else will be able to accept me. If that’s the case, I will wait like this until the seal is lifted.”

Remembering the private story I heard earlier, my mouth moved on its own.

“If the seal is lifted... what will you do?”

“I will burn this land asunder.”

That horrified me. My hair stood on end, my terror was like fireworks, unable to handle the tiger that was exuding such energy, and I felt such chills that I was could not speak.

“I will have the Sun fall, and I will swallow the Moon. I will show to humanity that the end of the world has arrived. With others of my household, we will find and kill every single member of the human race.”

In each word she said, she made clear her powers. No matter how you look at it, she was being serious.

“If this is Master’s decision, all of humanity’s lives will change before the sun has set.”

“Master’s scary when she’s angry. I hate it.”

I saw Saehee give an additional explanation in her usual expressionless manner, and Baduk was trembling and hiding behind Saehee, so she must not have been exaggerating.

“You...”

The tiger looked at me. Deep within her gaze I could see a terrible hatred, and I may have gone crazy, but I could also see a deep-seated sorrow. It was as if she were a normal girl who was cruelly hurt by a womanizer.

...What kind of simile is that?

“Leave this land. I do not want the blood of the man planned to be my husband to dirty my hands. Saehee.”

“Yes, Master.”

“Deal with the aftermath as you wish. I want to be alone. Nobody is to enter here until I say so.”

“Yes, I understand.”

Saehee bowed her head respectfully as the tiger turned around.

“Let us leave.”

Saehee took me by the arm, leading me.

Is it okay to leave it like this? Is it okay to return home and then run away from this country? And after the seal dissolves, will the tiger devastate this country?

This... doesn't make any sense.

What is this. This is absolutely crazy. This is completely crazy. It's crazy for phantoms to exist, and it's crazy that a phantom was hurt by my words, and it's crazy that because of my choice I got a phantom to massacre people. But above all, it's crazy that I shook off Saehee's hand and turned the tiger back around.

That's right! I didn't do it because I felt pity at her incredible sadness when I looked at her back! Nor is it because I could see my young self in her! I just did it because I was scared of what the tiger would do later!

"Hey!"

The tearful tiger looked up at me with a surprised expression, and perhaps she finally realized she was crying because she hid her eyes with her wrists as she spoke:

"This, this isn't what it looks like! I, I'm not crying!"

She was making a ridiculous excuse. That's right, you're not crying. I can see that dust got into your eyes first, Tiger-nim [\[11\]](#). But, hey. Why are you speaking like that? Although, the way you're speaking now definitely fits your child-like appearance bette. [\[12\]](#)

"You, don't you know you're not supposed to interrupt people when they're talking?"

"Huh?"

She peeked up at me with her tear-filled eyes.

"Of course I can't marry a girl I don't like. Even if you are my fiancé, it's impossible. But I don't want to reject you just like that."

"That's... What are you saying?"

Her parlance changed back, but that's not important.

“I can't just leave you.”

Narae, I'm sorry. Although I like you, this is for your sake and to keep our country safe and peaceful, so please forgive me.

“Let's go together. I don't want to leave you behind in a place like this.”

The tiger's ears pricked up. If you compare her from before to now, it was as though she was outshining the sun and moon; her expression clearly brightened immensely and she squeezed with the hand that grabbed mine and spoke.

“Are, are you serious?”

“I am.”

“You're saying that you're going to be my husband and love me?!”

Hey, hey. When did I ever go so far as to say that.

“It might be possible when we get to know each other better, and then when we're in love.”

And that'll also be possible when you've grown up a bit. Rather than speaking of marriage, it'd fit you better to be talking about your times tables. ...disregarding her true age.

“I'm happy! I'm happy! So you didn't give me up! You chose me!”

“The young master is clearly a lolicon.”

I heard words that I couldn't ignore to my side.

“Hey, who are you calling a lolicon?”

“What’s a lolicon?”

How am I supposed to explain to the tiger that’s asking me with such round eyes...

“It’s a word for people who are sexually interested in underaged girls.”

“Don’t say weird things!”

But the tiger expressed joy at Saehee’s words.

“So that’s it! So you were aroused because you like me! So my eyes really weren’t wrong!”

What, do you like lolicons? And do I have to give up on stopping those phantoms from calling me a lolicon as they pleased.

“Then does that mean that because the young master is a lolicon, you like me too?”

No, I have to properly tell them. After seeing Baduk’s naïve questioning, I couldn’t just leave it like this.

“I just don’t want to leave you alone in a place like this. I’m not a lolicon!”

“In public, that’s called being a lolicon or pedophilia.”

You’re noisy, shut up. My preference is large-breasted, older sisters. When I should hurry home and look at some pictures of big breasted ladies on the internet to reinforce my sexual identity.

Ah... but then there’s that.

“But you’re sealed to this place, right?”

“That is correct.”

The tiger nodded her head. Thankfully, the topic about lolicons seems to have been passed.

“Then what will you do? Can you leave this place?”

“Do not worry. At this stage, the seal has my true form trapped, but following you is no problem. I’m here now because the weather’s too hot.”

...Wait.

“True form? That tiger form from before isn’t your true form?”

The tiger smiled and answered.

“That shape is just a spiritual body. My true form is all of Jirisan.”

“...What?”

“The entirety of Jirisan is my true form.”

At the ridiculous scale, I lost what I was going to say.

“Do you now know of my greatness?”

Looking at my blank face, she stuck her chest out with pride, but looking at the tiger, I could only say these words.

“And yet you’re so small.”

I put my hand on top of the tiger’s head. It seems like it’d be comfortable to lay

my elbows there.

“Uu-! I’m going to grow! In a little bit, I’m going to grow up!!”

Looking at the tiger who raised her arms to hit me, it feels like I’m going to end up forgetting that her true identity is a tiger. Ah, but I didn’t ask the most important thing.

“But what’s your name? I’m Kang Sunghoon.”

“My name is Ho Rangii.” [\[13\]](#)

“...What?”

After Baduk, it’s Ho Rangii? I blankly looked down at the tiger as she yelled at me furiously.

“I, I have a different name given to me by heaven! But I’ll only tell you it when you have enough determination! Our names are like that! Or do you want me to tell you my name?”

I have no idea what she’s saying, but I firmly refused.

“That’s a nice name, Ho Rangii.”

“Awooo...”

Why do you look so unhappy.

“Then let’s go, Rangii.”

Since she’s Ho Rangii, I’ll call her Rangii. After calling her that, it seems like a really good name. If I name my daughter Rangii she’d be... Kang Rangii. ...let’s forget about that. Narae would kill me. Since I’ve chosen Narae to be my wife. Ah, I just remembered I should send Narae a text. Looks like I’ll have to message her while going down the mountain.

“Yeah!”

With the tiger by me, we left the tiger’s cave. Although, I didn’t want to experience that old proverb to survive in a tiger’s cave: keep your wits about you like this.

“Ah, but one thing. Are Corn Flakes your main diet?”

“...What is that?”

After coming back down the mountain, showering, and putting some clothes on, I turned on my cell phone to text Narae when the messages came flying in. In total there were... 13 of them. And the sender of all of them was my childhood friend and unrequited crush, Narae. The messages started out as [have you arrived?] [Well? Why aren’t you replying?] but changed to things like [wanna die?] [Wait there. I’m going there right now to get you!].

Just one day after summer vacation started a problem like the east and west lines blowing up simultaneously has occurred. And Rangii, not knowing my miserable situation,

“Why do I have to wear such bothersome things?! The clothes Sunghoon gave me is enough!”

While saying things like that,

“In order to live in the human world, this must be done, Master.”

She kept up her stubbornness to Saehee. And Baduk? She was curled up on the floor dozing, not caring at all to those two. In human form. She must feel totally at peace. I also wanted to go back to the days of my carefree childhood... No, no.

That's not the problem right now. For the time being, I called Narae. Before one whole ring could finish, Narae answered the phone.

“Hel...”

[The heck! Did something happen?! Why was it off?! If I call you, you’re supposed to answer, you idiot! Don’t you know what a cell phone’s for?!]

I stopped mid-word in reaction to Narae’s bullet-like voice. Ah, it’s scary. But still, in comparison to Rangii who was adamant about not wearing anything underneath a lone shirt, and the expressionless Saehee who was preaching the importance of attire, I was so thankful for this normal conversation that I could cry.

“Ye, yeah. Something came up while I was going up the mountain, so I forgot about my phone. I’m sorry.”

[Then there’s no point in you having it at all!]

She’s still talking about that.

“I’m sorry for worrying you.”

[Who, who was worrying!? Why would I worry about you?]

“Because we’re friends?”

[These days, who cares enough to bother their friends during vacation?!]

“You.”

[.....]

Hello, Miss Narae? Why are you not saying a word?

“Narae?”

[I didn’t hang up! That’s right, like you said I was worried because we’re friends. So what happened?]

She asked about me after regaining the use of her words. I want to tell her I’m alright, but the truth is I’m going to die. That’s because this place is a phantom paradise. And also, Narae still thinks that I’m here to attend a funeral, right? Since I thought that it until I got here. I hadn’t even imagined that someone would lie about a person’s death to lure me here.

“Just, I somehow sent...”

It was then.

“Sunghoon! Say something to Saehee as well! Why must I put on such cumbersome articles as that! I said I am comfortable being naked!”

That was Rangii yelling loudly inside of the house.

“Wait, I’m in the middle of a call.”

[.....Who was that just now?]

I felt a chill on the back of my neck. Has Narae’s voice ever been so cold? ...no. Never.

“No, that’s...”

“The lolicon young master should persuade Master. Will the young master not be aroused if the Master continues to be naked?”

You’re making my life harder.

[.....Master? Naked? Aroused?!]

I listened to her as goose bumps popped up. Na, Narae. Since when were your ears so good?

“No, that’s not it. The situation here is more complicated than the ocean is deep and the sky is wide, so there’s definitely nothing weird...”

“In the first place, when a man and a woman mate, things like clothes are...”

“Uwaak!!”

I quickly covered Rangii’s mouth with my hand and yelled out at Narae over the phone.

“I can explain!!”

But all I could hear in my ear was the segmented beep, beep, beep of my phone. A message arrived as I was stunned. It said, [Go die. Just die there.] .....How was I supposed to explain this later on?

Slurp--.

Rangii licked my palm with her rough tongue.

“Uraaak?!”

What are you doing, getting me dirty? There’s saliva on me!

“Why are you blocking my mouth? I said nothing wrong!”

Looking at the indignant and angry Rangii, I felt my patience explode and I spoke to her.

“Nothing wrong, my ass!! Humans have to wear clothes! And what kind of girl talks about mating and being comfortable when naked! Learn to be embarrassed!!”

I clenched my fist and hit Rangii on the head.

“Owie!”

She raised her hands to her drooping ears, caressing her head. Thanks to that her t-shirt started flapping, and a secret hidden part was dangerously close to being seen.

“He, he hit me! Sunghoon hit me!”

Close to tears and acting as if this was unfair, Rangii ran screaming to Saehee, and looking at Rangii clinging to Saehee’s chest, I felt like a complete bastard, but, hey! You were in the wrong first!

Saehee, who has no idea how to educate a child, rubbed Rangii’s head while calming her down.

“It’s okay, Master. That just now is how the young master expresses interest and love.”

You’re speaking complete nonsense again.

“The young master is mentally immature so he expresses his affection for the Master in an abusive manner. Specifically, the violence like before is a sign of affection.”

“Don’t do as you want and label me as an elementary school brat who can’t express his feelings of love! That just now was punishment!”

Her ears and even her tail pricked up and Rangii gave protest.

“What did I do wrong!?”

“I was talking to someone on the phone and you were screaming weird things right next to me!”

The tail drooped down. In its place, her hair formed a question mark. Oh man. What a convenient body.

“.....What’s that phone thing you’re talking about?”

Do I have to start explaining from there?

“A phone is used as a means of electrical communication, turning sound waves from spoken words into electrical currents, transmitting and travelling far away, turning into a voice so that spoken words may be exchanged. In this case, a conversation is being struck with the recipient of the phone call.

My jaw dropped at Saehee’s explanation. What are you, a living encyclopedia?

“How amazing!”

Rangii’s hair flew straight up.

“You mean humans have created such a device?!”

I’m more amazed at you in many ways.

“Then does that mean I was interrupting Sunghoon’s conversation with a person?”

This tiger’s quick to catch on.

“Yes. That’s right, you brat.”

“I’m sorry.”

Oh? I couldn’t help but feel embarrassed when Rangii bowed her head to me. Her tail went straight down, too, so it seems like she’s really apologizing. I never thought that she would apologize so honestly.

“Ah, no. It’s fine. Nothing terrible happened, anyway.”

Something terrible did happen. After hearing all that, Narae sent me a message telling me to die. Ah, while I have the chance, let’s message her, telling her I’m sorry. When I sent the message, Rangii spoke.

“Then that’s a relief. Since I mustn’t cause trouble to the man to be my husband.”

At those words, Saehee’s eyes suddenly flashed with light. No, that had to be my imagination. There’s no way a person’s eyes can shine like that.

“Master. If you do not wear human clothing, you will cause the young master much trouble.”

No, actually, I don’t think it was my imagination. My thinking was wrong from the beginning. Because she’s not human.

“...Is that so?”

Rangii carefully asked me. Although her gaze was almost begging me to say no, walking around like that with only a t-shirt on is a nuisance. Think about it. If she passed by my head when I was lying down on my bed...

“Yeah. It’s a nuisance. It’s a huge nuisance.”

“.....If that’s the case, then I have no choice.”

Rangii bowed her head while speaking lowly. Saehee didn't waste this opportunity, and with the hands of a master craftsman, she skillfully began to dress Rangii. It looked like a white hanbok for the top and blue shorts, but.....

"Hey. You need to take off my shirt first."

Why are you dressing her while she has on my clothes?

"Is that so?"

Rangii looked up at Saehee when she asked.

"No."

What do you mean, "no?" Ask those questions to me.

"That's my shirt. Take it off quickly."

"I know that couples are to share even a grain of rice."

These days, property management tends to happen separately.

"I will prepare clothes like this for you, young master."

But that's not the problem. Until now I told myself this situation couldn't be helped, but the fact that a girl is wearing the clothes I wore for half a day doesn't make me happy. Moreover, it's clothes drenched in sweat while I was climbing the mountain, and now the wearer's a phantom who looks like a child. I feel embarrassed that that shirt is over her bare skin. I opened my mouth to have a word with them, then I quickly turned my head.

"Hey, hey! Don't dress her right in front of me! No, why is she changing here in the first place?!"

Because I caught a glance of something when she was raising her leg to put on panties! Do you lack understanding of the word shame?

“Is it embarrassing to change clothes?”

“It is not.”

“Then shouldn’t he not care?”

“What do you mean, no?!!”

At this cry from my soul, Rangii answered.

“But it seems to me that Sunghoon is embarrassed when I change clothes? Then I won’t wear clothes.”

So then Rangii moved to take off her panties. Before Rangii’s hand that grabbed her panties could move downward, I hit my head to the ground, bowing to her as I spoke.

“I am not embarrassed when you change clothes, so please go ahead and change here.”

Let’s throw away common sense. That’s right. Rangii is a child who knows nothing. She may be old, but she’s just a little kid who has no common sense. No, she’s a newborn baby. Let’s think of her as that. Seriously, let’s think of her as that. But why are there tears coming out of my eyes? Farther away, Baduk yawned. .....really, a dog’s life is enviable.

After she took off the t-shirt -I was desperate in my own way-- and she put on the clothes Saehee prepared, I was unable to look at Rangii with a different

meaning.

She had the bangs of her black and white hair left alone, her long hair neatly braided with a black band tied to the end, dressed with traditional Korean wear as her top, with blue, hot pants-like shorts, and looking at her from the front makes it look like she's not wearing pants.

Ahh, the human imagination is truly mighty. There's obviously something there, but imagining such a vulgar lack of covering... why am I imagining that from a little brat?

“It’s the first time I’ve ever worn clothes, but it’s definitely uncomfortable.”

Rangii complained to Saehee.

“You will get used to it. Above all, won’t the perverted young master like this?”

“Is that so? Does Sunghoon like it when I wear such bothersome clothing?”

I was unable to answer back I like big breasted older sisters wearing clothing that shows off a lot of skin because I couldn’t ignore Saehee who was standing behind Rangii, expressionless. And I didn’t want to reject the excited Rangii because of my tastes.

“That’s right. It really fits you. You definitely look prettier than before.”

Her ears were fluttering and her tail was wagging. I wanted to say this before, but are you really a tiger? You’re a lot more like a dog or a cat.

“I’m happy! I’m happy! I’m happy! I’m happy!”

Seeing Rangii express her happiness with her excitement and by jumping about, I could only see her as a normal little kid. I couldn’t believe that this innocent kid and that tiger screaming “I’m going to burn this earth and kill everyone~”

were the same phantom. But,

“Sunghoon! I’m really glad that I met you!”

Seeing Rangii running up to my chest, there was definitely no way a human could jump..... wait. That kid jumped way too high? Rangii’s thin thighs were acting right before my eyes. Thank goodness this brat was wearing shorts properly. I could clearly see her top-obsured shorts. No wait. What is this?!

Rangii wrapped her two legs around my neck, hugging her body to my head. Maybe it’s a child’s unique smell, but although it was very small, I have to emphasize that there was a definite fragrance coming from Rangii’s body as she pressed her chest to my head.

“Hey! What are you doing!”

“It’s an expression of my happiness!”

So you express your happiness by wrapping your legs around people’s necks? Is that supposed to be a wrestling move, too?

“I can’t see in front of me! Get off!”

“Then I’ll go like this.”

Rangii skillfully moved to be on my shoulders before I could react. Rangii’s long tail wrapped itself around my chest. You should change your job from cat to monkey, seeing as you’re so similar to one. Will you be happy if you got to meet Jaechondaesong? [\[14\]](#)

“.....You’re heavy.”

A young kid weights 20-30kg (tn: 44-66lbs), so it’d be weirder if having that kind of weight on your shoulders wasn’t heavy. But the one directly causing said

weight is going to deny that obvious fact.

“No way! A person you love is on top of you so there’s no way it’s heavy?”

While saying that she hit my head multiple times. It hurts. Why are you hitting me. Did I say something weird? Is what you said not incorrect, Miss Tiger? Although if the one riding on my shoulders was Narae I’d attest to your statement, since this monkey-like, cousin to a cat little brat is on me, how could it not be heavy.

“It seems like you’re thinking of something unpleasant.”

She’s quite perceptive. In order to shift Rangii’s attention, I grabbed the ankle of the girl hitting my head and.....,

“Why are you doing that?”

She turned around energetically.

“Ack, what are you doing now?”

Then a moment after she said that.

“Kyahahaha! How fun!!”

She lied flat, beginning to scream cheerfully. I’m starting to get dizzy too, so I should stop. Since if I make a mistake it’ll be dangerous. I slowed down little by little, stopping. Wow, everything’s spinning. Rangii hugged my head with her legs, making sure she was sitting up on me and then collapsed. Her waist is strong.

“Was it fun?”

“Yeah! So human bodies are so weak that this makes them dizzy? But that was fun!”

“The young master is shockingly good at caring for children.”

“What do you mean shockingly? I took care of my younger relatives on my mom’s side so I got used to it.”

“No matter where I look, that kind of personality is nonexistent.”

“Thanks for the compliment.”

I spoke while Rangii, who made a nest on my head, was tapping her legs on me.

“Hey, now get down. Like you said, humans are weak and get tired easily.”

“Okay.”

The tiger released her legs from around my neck and tumbled backwards, falling. ....what?! I turned around, surprised, but I could see Rangii had landed on all fours, and a question mark formed on her head while she looked at me.

“What’s wrong?”

Ah, you’re a member of the cat family.

“The clueless young master worried about Master.”

“So my being worried makes me an idiot.”

“I’d prefer it if you were loving rather than worried.”

“Ah, that’s impossible.”

Love can’t suddenly form just from one word. Falling in love at first sight is an exception, but I already fell in love with Narae, so I can’t fall in love with you.

“Where else could you find such a lovable girl?”

Puffing out her lacking chest, she spoke proudly while tilting her head up, and while she may be lovable, something was different. Rather than love for that girl, what I felt was..... That's right, fatherly affection. I suppose you could say that it's too easy to feel fatherly affection for her. And so, holding onto all that affection,

“That's right. Our Rangii is very, very lovable.”

I patted Rangii's head. Seeing Rangii smile so happily at this, it made her really look like an innocent little kid.

“Really?”

“Yes—.”

Since she's a lovable little kid. Rangii clearly showed a happy expression at my words, but strangely, it disappeared after a moment,

“Then what should..... I do.....”

She started muttering something I couldn't understand.

What's wrong? This is the first time I saw a kid look so down after getting complemented.

Ah, this is the tiger from Dangun mythology. Could my words or actions have brought up bad memories?

Ah, I don't know. If she doesn't tell me, then I don't have a clue. For some reason I got upset and lied down in my room. Then at that auspicious moment, a stomach grumbled.

Grooowl—.

That was my stomach. Now that I think about it, I haven't eaten anything since getting here.

"Then, please excuse me. I shall prepare a meal for the pig-like young master."

Let's filter those words through my brain. That is easily my favorite thing that Saehee said today.

"Food?"

Baduk woke up after hearing the word food.

"Will you greedily eat what I bring?"

Are you hiding some side dishes somewhere is what I thought.

"Yeah."

"I understand."

I came to regret what I said.

A moment later. Saehee came carrying a table with enough on it to break its legs. Even at a glance, I could tell there were over 10 side dishes on it. How bourgeois. I'm not jealous! There's no way I'm jealous of how luxuriously you can fill your table! I'm just going to gracefully eat it!

But after that well-endowed table was laid in front of me, rather than pick up a spoon, I raised a finger to ask Saehee a question.

".....What is this?"

"It is grilled salamander. Marinated, barbecued salamander."

“Then, this?”

“It is steamed snake. Recently caught with its internal organs removed, braised to keep taste and nutrition. Even the shape was perfectly preserved.”

“And this.”

“Deer antlers.”

“That?”

“The gallbladder of a bear.”

“That?”

“Centipede blanched in boiling water wrapped with kimchi made 3 years ago into bossam. [\[15\]](#)

I wanted to flip the table.

“What kind of side dishes are these?! Are you making it so I only eat rice?!!”

Even a frog’s side dishes would be better!

“It is not good to be picky.”

“That’s right, being picky is bad! And I’m not picky!”

I was raised by an ill-tempered dad and my mom whose days spent at home I can count with one hand; I wouldn’t have survived if I were picky about side dishes. But, but who can eat this stuff?! Do you think I’m a person from TV? Did you think I’d eat it while saying “It’s a really dangerous animal, but it’s also high in vitamins and proteins”?! Are you going to record Man VS Phantom? How the

hell am I supposed to eat this?!

“Who could eat this?!”

“Looks great.”

“Looks really extravagant.”

I’m sorry. The residents are phantoms. Seeing Baduk eyeing the barbecued salamander and Rangii concentrating her sight on the bear gallbladder, it felt like I was Alice in Wonderland.

“Say, Saehee.”

“Yes, young master.”

“I’m a human. A normal one at that, until yesterday.”

And I saw some shocking things, so I thought I’d finally started to revolt. Why, you may ask? Because before my eyes, I saw Saehee’s eyes widen and her hand cover her open mouth as her brain comprehend this distorted information!

“Is, is that so?”

She’s also stuttering?!

“I had always thought the young master was a thoughtless, moronic human.”

“.....Even if you say I’m a thoughtless, moronic human, I can’t eat that.”

“I understand. Then I will prepare the food again.”

I spoke to Saehee while she was getting up.

“No, you don’t have to. Well, I’ll just eat it this time.”

I may have difficulty eating such impactful side dishes, but if I look closely, I can see a few seasoned vegetables there. I had been holding a spoon, thinking I would eat like this without realizing that fact. There were only my eating utensils on the table.

“You’re not eating?”

Rangii answered my question.

“We’re going to eat in the kitchen, so do not worry.”

“Why?”

“That is proper etiquette.”

Like I asked, what era are you from?

“Who does that these days? Let’s just eat together.”

Rangii spoke, embarrassed.

“No, it’s etiquette. We cannot do that.”

.....Even though you’re worrying over this now.

“Eating alone makes the food taste bad. Saehee.”

“Yes, young master.”

“Prepare the table so Rangii, Baduk, and you can all eat.”

“What? Me too?”

Baduk looked questioningly at me. Why are you doing that?

“But I can just eat the mixed up leftovers?”

Ah, that's right, you're a dog.

Hm?

.....Ah.

Mother. Your son has gotten to the point of treating a house-sized phantom, a phantom transformed into a human, like a normal dog.

If I saw Baduk eating my leftovers all mixed up in a dog bowl, I would lose something important as a human being, so I'll have to make her eat with us by force.

“That's enough. Just eat together.”

“Yes, young master.”

She may have made it seem like she refused once, but a little later, her tail was wagging and her head was nodding. She's not happy just because she gets to eat food sooner, right? Saehee left the room for a moment. Saehee came carrying rice, utensils, and more side dishes for me to eat on a tray and set them on the table. If you had that, you should have brought it out earlier. I let out a small sigh and held my spoon.

“Then let's eat.”

“Yeah.”

“Yes.”

“Thank you for the meal~.”

I heard each respective reply and with my spoon in hand..... but I put it immediately down and hit the tiger in the head.

“Ow?! Why are you hitting me? Don’t you know the saying that even Baduk shouldn’t be bothered during a meal?” [\[16\]](#)

That’s because you’re a tiger.

“Who eats food with their hands?”

Is this India? Look at who’s next to you. Baduk’s eating while using her utensils like a civilized phantom! She is eating a little too fast, but never mind that. How can a tiger not do what a dog can?

“What’s weird about eating with my hands? I’m a tiger!”

“Ah, yes. You’re a tiger who changed into a human. If you’re going to eat like that, change back into a tiger.”

“.....Is that okay?”

I only said one thing to Rangii who was carefully studying my expression and whose hair was creating a question mark.

“If you are, then go back to the cave.”

“Uwuuuh—. How mean. Suddenly saying that, Sunghoon you’re mean—.”

Looking at how depressed Rangii looked, I felt like a bastard but I really didn’t do anything wrong?

“Young master, you truly are the son of my scumbag older brother.”

I didn't do anything wrong!

"If you don't like it, then eat with your utensils."

At my words, Rangii's shoulders drooped and her tail fell to the ground as she clumsily held her spoon-- no wait-- she held it in her fist like a kindergartener and started shoveling the rice. When she wanted to eat the side dishes, she picked up the chopsticks, stuck them through the food, and barely brought it to her mouth. But as grains of rice fell and side dishes dropped, her tears began to fall. She was totally crying.

.....I can't watch this anymore.

"Hey, Rangii."

"Sniff, what is it, Sunghoon-the-meanie-who-enjoys-bullying-me?"

My name isn't that long.

"Bring your rice bowl and utensils and carry them over here to eat."

"Why?"

"Come over here and eat."

I spoke while patting the seat next to me, and Rangii moved cautiously towards me. It seems she remembers how I hit her before. When Rangii moved to the spot I indicated, I sneakily moved behind Rangii and sat.

"Hm? What are you doing all of a sudden?"

I crossed my legs and lifted her onto my legs. It's heavy.

"Hueek?!"

Her totally straight tail was tickling my chin. It'd be tough if she got the wrong idea so I spoke to her before that could happen.

“Don’t think anything weird.”

I spoke while picking up the spoon and putting it in Rangii’s hand properly with my right hand.

“This is how you hold the spoon. Understand?”

“Y, yeah. I understand.”

“Try and eat.”

Rangii moved her spoon to eat the rice. It was sloppy, but she was eating her rice a lot better now that she was holding the spoon well. She was totally cute, going nyam nyam while eating.

“And this is how you hold chopsticks. It’ll be tough at first, but this’ll be the most comfortable as you get used to it so make sure to hold them like this. Okay?”

I held the chopsticks in Rangii’s hand. Since holding chopsticks is complicated, I fiddled with her hand until I noticed something and stopped. Until I noticed how small and smooth Rangii’s hand is, and her face turning red.

.....Right now I’m doing something that would be totally embarrassing in public. Even though the truth is that all I did was teach a child how to hold her eating utensils. Un-until I was a sixth-grader in elementary school, whenever my mom came home she’d put me on her knee and eat like this with me! I’m not the weird one!

“You are calmly doing incredibly embarrassing things, young master.”

My face became red-hot at Saehee’s words.

“Ah, no! I’m just teaching her proper etiquette!”

“I understand. If that is what the young master says, then it must be true.”

In times like this, I can’t tell if she’s making fun of me or being serious because of her expressionless face.

“A, anyway! You get it now, right?”

“Y, yeah. I get it. Thank you, Sunghoon.”

I suddenly felt embarrassed so I set Rangii down and I began to eat. I moved my chopsticks to pick up a vegetable, but then I saw Rangii reach her arm out to get the wrapped centipede.

.....Her arm is too short to reach. It’s a tear-worthy sight. I don’t know if she thought it was improper to get up during the meal, but her butt remained stuck to the ground.

“U—uk.”

She groaned like this while and all I could think was so this is why stature is important. I tried to get the attention of those two with a ‘you two should take care of your master’ stare, but Baduk was too busy eating, her butt moving up and down and her tail wagging. Saehee was staring expressionlessly at thin air, so she didn’t notice my gaze.

“Uu—. I can’t reach it. I want to eat it..... Unya—.”

Ah, she’s even beginning to cry. ....There’s no helping it. I endured the strange food and grabbed the centipede wrap with my chopsticks.

“Ah—.”

I heard Rangii's gasp. If I put it on my own rice bowl and ate it then it'd be the perfect way to bully her, but, ah, that's impossible. Like I said, my stomach isn't strong enough to eat a centipede wrap. I nimbly put it on top of Rangii's rice bowl.

"If there's a side dish you want to eat then tell me. I'll give it to you."

".....My eyes truly were correct!"

Looking at Rangii's big smile, I felt an inexplicable sense of guilt.

Sorry. I don't know if I did anything wrong, but sorry."

After eating dinner, the sky was already darkened.

I guess despite the weird side dishes, Saehee's actually a really good cook? One thought suddenly came to my attention. I accidentally overate a little, as a result. Though Rangii ate more than me. I have no idea how she could be putting all that in her tiny body.

As I was blanking out while digesting the food, I heard my cellphone's ringtone. Is it Narae? It's probably Narae? Does she want to forgive me? I quickly got up and checked my phone.

It's Dad.

My anger was surging within me. I shouted immediately after opening my phone.

"You sure called at a good time! What kind of parent tricks their son and sends him to a phantom den?!"

The receiving party didn't say anything. Hm? Why's he like that? If it were Dad, then he'd go 'hahaha, that's your dad for you, I guess if it's unfair, then your dad did it, hahaha'? It was then. I heard her voice.

[O—oh. Our son. So you've even learned how to yell at your mother? You've really grown up?]

I screwed up. It's Mom. My hands were shaking and a cold sweat chilled my back.

"M, m, m, mother?"

[Why're you like that, my son, whom I love, who also stabbed a dagger into my heart? You're not going to give me the excuse that you saw it was your dad calling you so you didn't know it was me, are you?]

".....But that's what happened."

[Your mother is sad. At how you bit your mother who worked to the bone to raise you. I was worried for my son so I came immediately from my work in China to Korea, half-killed my husband, and called you with his phone just to have you raise your voice at me.....]

Then mother deliberately stopped talking and took a deep breath.

[I'm so sad.]

"Ah, ha, ha, ha."

My mouth which moved so easily in front of the tiger was stuck.

[To thrust such a claw at me, my son who just screwed up, shall I use this opportunity and time to break you?]

He—ek!

“I’m sorry! I made a mistake! Please spare me!”

[Oh my, but there’s no reason for me to kill the son who I went through great pains to give birth to?]

No, it seems like you’re going to kill me. My hand was shaking so much that I had to struggle to hold onto my cellphone, and then I heard my mom give a small sigh.

[More importantly, has everything gone well?]

That’s a relief. My affectionate and merciful mom seems to have decided to skip over my blunder.

“Yes.”

[Really. This louse—kwajeek—without any explanation—uwaaak!!—sent you there, do you have any idea—pok!—how word this mother was?—kyaaaak—]

I’ll just ignore the noise in the background.

[Really, when will you grow up?—I’ll die before that! I said I’m going to die!—will you get yourself together if you die?—I’m really dying!!—]

Ah, they really are a close couple. I’d better marry a gentle, completely non-violent woman.

[So did everything go well with Rangii?]

“Oh? Mom, you know about Rangii?”

[Isn’t it obvious? Who do you think took you there before you were even weaned off your mother’s milk?]

Ah, of course. Mom took me to Rangii and then..... created the engagement.

I totally forgot that the main culprit was my mother.

[Really, there was a girl who was so cute I wanted to take her as my daughter, and I think I remember making a promise but it's all a little hazy. Well, it can't have been that important.]

Am I solely surrounded by people who totally lack common sense?

“.....You really didn’t notice anything after seeing Rangii?”

[So what if she’s a tiger phantom? When that’s just her astral body?]

She’s open-minded. Way too open. To the point where I have nothing else to say.

[So come back tomorrow.]

“What? Why?”

I was thinking about bringing Rangii to Seoul with me, but tomorrow? Isn’t that too fast? Because I was thinking about teaching her about the human world at grandfather’s estate before going back to Seoul. But, mom.....

[Why? Are you talking back to me right now?]

She changed my thoughts in just one word.

“I shall obey.”

[Then let’s eat dinner together tomorrow. Okay?]

“.....Yes.”

After saying that as if I would eat in hell if I didn’t agree, Mom hung up the phone. Ah man, dear God. Please save me.

“Are you done with your call?”

Of course, it’s not the time to find God, but deal with this. Seeing Rangii appear by opening the paper sliding door, I felt as if I still had a long ways to go before completing my 12 labors. But what did she just say?

“Oh, were you waiting?”

Rangii went “ahem” and stood proudly.

“Of course I did. I know it is improper to interrupt in your husband’s phone call.”

If she hadn’t added the part about husbands, then I would’ve honestly wanted to compliment her.

“Ah, yeah. Thanks.”

That’s why I thanked her so curtly.

“So why did you come here? It’s getting dark so a good kid should be going to sleep now, right?”

“That’s why I came here.”

I had an ominous feeling so I’ll just cut this at the bud.

“So you came to say goodnight before going to bed? Yeah, goodnight to you too. Okay, now leave. Right now.”

“I came to sleep with you.”

“He—y.”

Are you just going to ignore me?

“It’s okay. Even if you cannot stand your adolescent vigor and attack me, I shall accept you with my whole body.”

Does she even understand what she’s saying? And do you really think I’d attack a little kid like you if I couldn’t stand my adolescent vigor?

I was worrying about how to send her back when,

“Excuse me.”

Opening the door even more and carrying blankets, Saehee entered the room. ....how did she just open the door? She didn’t use her foot and she was carrying blankets with both her hands.

“I shall prepare a place for you, young master.”

“By whose decision?”

It seems like Saehee didn’t have an appropriate response to what I said.

“Because if I do not prepare this, then a terrible situation will occur.”

“Like I said, why?”

“It’s because of me.”

“This is your doing?!”

She ignored my words, but seeing her skillfully lay out the bed, I stopped thinking about stopping her. I guess you can call it despair. But after she prepared the bedding, she said,

“Then I shall go back. Please have a good night.....”

I couldn’t do anything but grab Saehee.

“Hey. Why did you set two pillows but only one blanket?”

“Ah, were you going to have her sleep on your arm?”

“That’s not it. And why the hell is there a tissue box right next to the bed?!”

Where the hell did you learn that kind of thing from?!

“I heard on the internet that when a couple sleeps together, this is necessary.”

“.....Does internet work here?”

“It is wireless.”

I was shocked at how our country’s technical prowess allowed access to wireless internet deep within the mountains, wait, that’s not it.

“We’re not a couple yet, Saehee.”

“You will be one starting tomorrow. Since the young master is a lolicon.”

“You’re saying that again?!”

“Then I shall take my leave now.”

“Hey! Hey!!”

While saying that, Saehee disappeared like she was fog and closed the door.

Just staring blankly at the door won't change the situation. I wish someone would press the rewind button on my life. Even two minutes would be enough.

"Aren't you going to sleep?"

".....When did you get in there?"

Rangii was unexpectedly underneath the covers, with just her head poking out. Who said you could get in. I'm saying it's more comfortable for me to sleep alone so get out! is what I wanted to yell at her, but I shut my mouth after seeing her clothes laid neatly next to the blankets. I could see Rangii's outer clothing and lady's panties. This must be that, right?

".....Hey."

"What's wrong?"

"Did you take your underwear off too?"

"I was told that not wearing underwear when sleeping is good for your health."

That kind of saying does exist, but who told....., it was Saehee. There's no one else but Saehee. After releasing a big sigh, I got up while packing the shorts I brought to wear as pajamas.

"You sleep here. I'll sleep in another room."

"Why are you going to do that?"

Rangii sat up. The blanket that was covering her up to her neck naturally moved down and I could see..... couldn't see her pale skin.

“Hey.”

“My name is Ho Rangii.”

“No, just ignore the small stuff. How did you end up wearing that.”

The pronoun that, in this case, is being used to indicate my t-shirt. Speaking of Rangii taking off her clothes, after I took that t-shirt from her and stuffed it in my bag, she's wearing it right now.

“Yeah, do whatever you want. Wear it or don’t.”

I got up and pulled the sliding door to the side. It's not moving. .....huh? I'm using all my strength to try and pull a door made of wood and thin paper, but it won't budge.

“Why won’t this open?”

I was talking to myself, surprised, but then

“For Master and the young master’s time of intimacy, I applied magic. Until the first chicken cries even I cannot open the door, so no matter what kind of hard play you do, you can relax.”

Saehee answered. Hey, dammit. So you were there.

“Open the door right now!”

There's no response. It doesn't seem like anyone's behind the door. Has she disappeared for now?! I tried to open the door again, but it really won't open.

“What are you doing there?”

.....Should I ask Rangii for help? No, there's no reason why Rangii would listen to my request. Would it really be so bad to just sleep? I still remember a thought like that from before. But still, I should at least try and ask her.

“Hey, open this door.”

“I don't know how to use that kind of magic.”

“.....Why?”

“Saehee knew those trivial magics so I didn't have to learn them. I can break it by my own strength. Should I do that?

“It's fine.”

Whatever, I don't know anymore. I'll just sleep here for today. I'll just think of it as sleeping with a younger cousin. It, it's embarrassing because this came about so quickly. It's okay. Rangii's still a child. If I were sleeping with Narae or some other big-breasted older sister type I might be able to escape virginity through some means..... no, I mean I would be able to escape it, but since it's Rangii, it's okay.

“Let's just sleep.”

I decided to just get this weird activity over with. I got in quietly next to Rangii. It's a large blanket so there's a lot of space left for me.

“I haven't prepared myself for our first night yet.....”

I prepared myself to hit you on the head a while ago.

“Owie! What in the world do you think my head is?!”

“A cure to stop you from spouting nonsense.”

“Uuuu—. You are the only one since I was born to ever hit me on the head.”

“Think of it as a good experience.”

More importantly, the blanket is very nice and thin. The feel of the wind blowing softly through is really refreshing. Did she put into consideration the fact that it's summer?

“Then I'm going to sleep. You go to sleep too.”

“Is the first night really meant to be like this?”

Don't ask me.

“I heard that we're supposed to do something more the bigger our love for each other is, before we go to sleep. How strange.”

“.....Why are you so fixated on that?”

After hesitating for a moment, Rangii responded to my question while grabbing my hand.

“This will be a long, boring story, but would you like to hear it?”

“It's fine, I still think fondly of grandmothers telling an old folk tale.”

“In what way am I like a grandmother?”

Rangii pinched my side.

“Hey hey hey.”

I spoke as Rangii took the blanket from me and rolled it around herself as she

spun away.

“Even if I don’t know other things, I know that Sunghoon needs a punishment for making fun of someone’s age.”

This may be a bit of a late response, but you have to be over 4000 years old, so if you think about the wording of what I said I’m not wrong? But even if it is the middle of summer, I might catch a cold if I sleep without a blanket. I also don’t want to harm Baduk’s sanctity by having her catch a human’s cold. Looking at Rangii’s back as she was sulking, I patted Rangii’s clearly visible head and spoke.

“It’s a joke, you brat. Don’t be upset.”

“.....I’m not upset.”

Rangii quietly pushed the edge of the blanket that was originally around her body towards me. I grabbed my side of the blanket and pulled. She spun quickly and got right up next to my chest. It’s way too warm with you on me is what I was about to say when,

“It was a long time ago.”

Rangii started her story right after she hugged my chest.

“I was watching over and protecting the children who were eating humans. My fellow chiefs and I, as great phantoms, had no reason to eat humans, but the normal ones ate the spirits of humans to increase their strength.”

On this topic, back then this was a natural occurrence. Because after phantoms ate humans, other humans’ fear would act to prolong the life of the phantoms for days.

“And so, one day, I found a strange sight.”

A mother and child. And a phantom. The phantom was going to eat the pair

when,

“I couldn’t understand. One’s own life is more important than any other’s life. This is the logic of all those who have life. But then the moment they were about to be eaten, the mother attempted to save her child’s life by sacrificing her own.”

At first, I thought that was just an instinct to save her species.

“But it wasn’t. I thought that their mating and creating offspring was all this was, but a man and woman who were completely unrelated by blood, despite their fear being plain to see, sought to sacrifice themselves. And when I saw this, I found out my thinking was incorrect. What could be making this pair, who were so deathly afraid and facing death, act for the sake of another.”

And so, one day, she asked the wisest human. How can a human sacrificing herself for the sake of another, and he answered like this.

“Dear mountain god, that is love.”

The mountain god, Rangii, was shocked by this.

“Then if I were to receive this love..... How happy would I be. I was so bored and bored and bored. Receiving love is the only way for me, who lives without a purpose, to have purpose. So, how could I not be interested?”

At those words.

“I want to be loved.”

I suddenly felt as if Rangii, who was hugging my chest, was far away.

“I heard that all couples who love each other get married. So I want to get married with you and receive your love.”

Rangii's thoughts on love are wrong. You can't call that love. Simply for fun, to love just to make yourself happy, is not what I view love to be. That's closer to a kind of game.

But I couldn't bear to tell Rangii that her thinking was wrong. Rangii believed that was love for such a long time because of the seal. A long time that I couldn't possibly fathom.

Could I even explain to her what was wrong if I told her that her thinking was incorrect? And could I explain to Rangii what love is?

It'd be impossible. I'm not the one who should tell her about that anyway. So I said,

“Is that so.”

I responded to Rangii's words,

“Yeah. It is.”

To Rangii, who so thoroughly believed she would receive love from me and was smiling so innocently, I couldn't do anything but rub her head.

“Huwee~.”

Rangii was happy so her ears were down and she was smiling brightly. I wish someone would quickly appear and properly teach this baby-like phantom what love really is.

Since there's no way that person can be me.

Could it be because of what happened today? After patting Rangii's head, I lost consciousness and I fell asleep.

“.....Are you sleeping?”

The last thing I heard was Rangii talking, embarrassed.

It's cold. Even though I have the blanket over me, it's cold. The cold woke me up. Ugh—. How is it this cold? I curled my body together, but I'm not a bug so I couldn't just roll into a ball. I flailed my arm on the ground out of the blanket to find anything extra to cover me with. My bag should be around here somewhere..... Ah, I don't know what it is, but I grabbed something warm. With my hand outstretched, I used it as a substitute heater and hugged it to me. It was big, a perfect fit on my chest, and extremely warm. With even a nice fragrance coming from it, it was the perfect thing to hug and sleep with.

“Uu-ung..... What the..... Su, Sunghoon?”

Hm? The heater was wriggling and now it's talking. Well, not like I care. If a dog and a tiger can talk, why can't a heater talk. But still, it might be a strict heater, so I slightly opened one eye to look at the heater and as I lifted my head, I saw Rangii looking at me. Ah, the thing I thought was a heater was actually Rangii. Then I don't care.

“Since it's cold— I should sleep like this.....”

“Ye, yeah.”

Even if I didn't like this, it'd be nice to sleep like this. But it's not as warm as before? Back then, I clearly..... Ah, back then, her tail was wriggling because she turned around. This little minx. I turned Rangii back around and stuck close to her back.

“This side..... is warmer.”

“Uu—uk.”

With my face on Rangii’s head and my arm under her neck to give her an arm-pillow, I wrapped my arm around her hip and thanks to the heat and smell radiating from her, I fell asleep.

“I, I can’t..... go to sleep like this.”

I can go to sleep easily.

“.....it feels wrong to go through something so troubling.”

It’s definitely troublesome. It felt nice to hug her because her body is so soft. I moved my hand and touched her belly.

It’s soft.

“Unyak!”

*Feel, feel* A kid’s belly is definitely soft and round. This might become a habit. Then how will other places be? And so I fell asleep while caressing Rangii’s soft body like this.

“U, unyaaang—.”

It’s troubling. I woke up and was greeted with an unprecedented development, unable to figure out how to deal with this, so it was extremely troubling. I, I should calm down. I calmed down and objectively examined the situation.

Right now I’m lying on the bed like a shrimp in the blankets. And Rangii’s lying

down with her back on my chest. My left hand is under her neck, giving her an arm pillow, and my right hand is on her stomach. No, it was touching it. Since I moved it right after I woke up.

This brat, her belly is strangely softer than her chest..... no, I mean right now I look perfectly like a degenerate. A pervert. Like a lolicon. What should I do in this situation? I can't even change my position because of my left arm. It'd be counterproductive to move my left arm and wake up Rangii. And while I was unable to do anything,

Cock a doodle doo~.

A totally generic-sounding chicken's cry echoed through the air. Ah, has the first chicken cried? For the sun to rise now, I must've woken up really early. Actually, it's a relief I got up so early. Since I woke up before Rangii.

Right then,

Du-ru-ruk.

The door's open.

Wearing the same black modernized hanbok and maintaining her lack of expression, Saehee opened the door and entered, although just saying 'it was Saehee' would have sufficed, I purposefully increased the amount of words I used to try and slow down time, but it didn't work.

"....."

"....."

Our eyes met. A moment later the corners of Saehee's mouth rose slightly.

"Lolicon. Pervert. Human scum. Which do you prefer, young master?

“You’re wrong! What you think happened didn’t really happen!”

“It seems your exhaustion from last night has not been reduced, so I shall contact you later.”

This damn woman doesn’t have any thoughts about listening to what others say.

“I said that’s not it!”

“U—ung. What’s..... not it?”

Oh God. Rangii woke up.

Rangii rubbed her eyes and while still half-asleep,

“Ha—ahm..... I wasn’t able to sleep properly because of Sunghoon..... so I’m going to sleep more.”

After saying something bound to cause a misunderstanding, she spun to my side and after looking towards me,

“Snoore—.”

She fell asleep.

Du-ru-ruk.

The door’s closed.

With Saehee acting as if she knew everything already, I gave up on explaining the

situation to her, and for whatever reason there was only stamina food for breakfast, so after eating that I started packing up. Mom said for me to go back to Seoul so I'd better thoroughly prepare beforehand. Rangii crouched beside me and started talking.

“Is there somewhere you’re going?”

“I need to go home. I can’t stay here anymore.”

“Home?”

“My home.”

“.....You’re going to Seoul?!”

After being lost in thought for a bit, she jerked back in surprise. What’s wrong?

“Wha, what are you going to do about me? Are you just going to throw me away and leave?”

Are you a dog I picked up from the street? Throw you away? I tried to say of course you’re going with me, but Rangii stopped me with a shocking statement.

“Then what was all that last night? Was it a midsummer night’s prank?!”

“Don’t say something that can be so easily misunderstood!!”

What do you mean what I did last night?! All I did was hug you and go to sleep!

I’d better change the subject before she says something strange again.

“Also, of course you’re going with me, so who’s going to be thrown away?

“.....Eh?”

A question mark appeared above Rangii's head.

"Then are you not going to go? You'll stay here alone?"

"I--I can come, too?"

Rangii looked like she was about to cry. That expression made me uneasy. A kid shouldn't make that kind of face. So I spoke a little angrily.

"I told you in the cave. Let's go together. Do you have dementia?"

Rangii's tail stretched out straight.

"The Sunghoon who talks about dementia is bad!"

I'll ignore that.

"So is there any problem with following me?"

After getting lost in thought about it for a moment, Rangii shook her head.

".....There's no big problem."

Are you saying that there's a small problem, then?

"But if I follow you I may be a nuisance."

"What about it?"

"Can't you remain here?"

"I can't."

“Why not?”

“My mom told me to come to Seoul immediately.”

And since it's best to fix the misunderstanding with Narae as soon as possible. But Rangii, this brat. After hearing about Mom, she lowered her head and her tail was shaking from side to side. She seems depressed?

“What's wrong?”

“If it's a command from my mother-in-law, then there is no helping.....”

“And just who's your mother-in-law?”

“Is it strange to call the mother of my husband mother-in-law?”

Your assumption is wrong in the first place.

“No, moving on from that.”

And I've gone beyond the level understanding her as a little girl saying nothing more than when I grow up I'm going to marry Dad~. I guess I've grown up.

“But your reaction to me saying it was my mom was weird?”

“Ah, that.”

Rangii fiddled with her tail as she spoke.

“Mother-in-law is difficult to go against, even I cannot do anything.”

“What do you mean by that?”

“Mother-in-law believes that if she put her mind to it, she could do something

even to a spirit like me.”

“.....It must be difficult when someone’s so delusional.”

Her real body is Jirisan and just her spiritual body is the size of a mountain, so if there’s someone who deludes herself into thinking she can take on Rangii, then of course it’d be difficult to face her.

“But for that to be truly possible.....”

“Eh?”

What kind of nonsense is that? Mom’s definitely a little unusual, but she’s still a normal human? How can Mom face a phantom like you?

“Listen well. We phantoms most fear humans who believe in themselves and think they can do anything. Even great phantoms such as I cannot injure humans without having a material form.”

“So you’re saying my mom’s that kind of person?”

Rangii nodded her head. Wow, Mom. You were acknowledged by the tiger from the Dangun myth.

“Well, is that so.”

Even if I didn’t know that, Mom’s the one who married Dad to reform him. If you look at it in a certain way, she’s more of a freak than Dad. She had the strange confidence that led to her motivation to fix Dad’s personality.

Maybe it’s because I inherited that from her, but I grew up believing only in what I thought was right while totally disregarding others no matter what they said. I know it’s a bad habit, but it’s really hard to fix what’s called a personality.

But the problem I need to think about right now isn’t my personality, but how I can go to Seoul with Rangii. Because Mom said to come back to Seoul together,

if I don't do that then my life may be in danger. So I looked at Rangii again.

"Are you saying you won't go with me?"

"But if I go to Seoul....."

Rangii shook her tail from side to side, lost in worry. I don't know what you're worrying about, but I might end up being beaten by my mom if you don't go to Seoul.

So I'm saying it.

"I'll protect you."

".....Eh?"

"No matter what my mom does, no matter what happens I'll protect you, so let's go together."

Don't go together and get killed or go together and something happens. Between those two, obviously I'll pick the latter.

"Sunghoon....."

Rangii was shaking.

"Do you really mean it?"

"Of course."

Even though if you don't then I'll die.

Totally clueless of my circumstances, Rangii crouched down and,

“Truly, I knew you were my fated one!”

Uwak! Rangii made me fall by suddenly jumping up and rubbed her face on my cheek. Even as I was surprised by how soft and warm she felt, I grabbed her waist to try and pry her off when,

“There is a saying that teenage boys are like dogs in heat, but that seems to be the truth.”

At Saehee’s words, who inexplicably opened the door and was sitting respectfully outside, I hugged Rangii, set her down to the side, and got up.

“You should stop with the nonsense, you silly person.”

“I am not a person.”

Now I’m not even curious about what you are. I’m talking about what kind of phantom you are.

“More importantly, Rangii’s going to Seoul with me, but is there a bus that comes here?”

But Saehee ignored me and looked at Rangii then spoke.

“Are you planning on going to Seoul, master?”

Rangii nodded her head. Saehee’s usual emotionless expression collapsed for a moment but returned to normal in an instant, leaving me unable to know what that expression was.

“Is that so. In that case, I will prepare the car.”

“But what are you going to do?”

“Obviously I shall attend to Master and remain at her side.”

Couldn't you just stay here? For the sake of my sanity.

No, I should look on the bright side. If I go with Rangii alone then I'll have to take care of her as well. Since Mom's busy with work and Dad's that kind of person. In that case it'd actually be best for Saehee to come with us. But I'm still going to ask what I have to ask.

"What about the house?"

"Baduk will be here."

Baduk became a guard dog.

".....Will it still be okay? Won't Baduk be lonely if she's all by herself?"

"You do not have to worry. The children that left because of the smelly young master will return after realizing you have left and they will play with her."

If I respond then I lose. I ignored Saehee's deliberate word choice and asked a question.

"Those children you talked about, they're phantoms right?"

"That is correct."

Then this place really will become a phantom's mansion.

"Then I shall prepare the bags."

Just like when she came here, she disappeared silently. She really lacks a presence. If I were walking on a road in the middle of the night and she spoke to me from behind I might have a heart attack.

"I'm gonna pack my things, so you too. If you have anything to bring then pack

it."

At my words, Rangii grabbed me from behind and hugged onto my neck.

".....What're you doing?"

"What I'm going to bring."

Am I an object?

"Anything else?"

"None. All I need is Sunghoon."

.....Ah, that's actually a little touching. This brat, she's so young that she's able to say such incredibly embarrassing things. That's why she's cute. Isn't she cute? She's cute. So much so that I want to bite her.

"Yeah. Thanks."

Since I couldn't bite her, I put my hand on top of hers.

When I packed my backpack and headed to the yard, Baduk was waiting for me.

"Young master, isn't there any way you could stay here longer?"

Although it's sad to see Baduk with her tail down straight down and looking at me so mournfully as if she was about to cry,

"Sorry. Something urgent came up."

Because in this world, there's nothing more precious than one's own life.

"Whi—ine."

Uwak?! She's really crying! Tears fell from her eyes like waterfalls and as I saw her wiping at her eyes with the backs of her hands, I thought such a weird thought as 'in this world, could this dog girl's tears be the most precious thing in the world?'

No, that's not right. If my mind weakens here then tonight I'm going to be eating dinner in hell. For Mom, it'd be an easy task to capture her son from Jirisan. I spoke while petting Baduk's head.

"I'll be back after I settle what I have to do. Don't cry, you brat. If strangers saw this, they'd think we were separating forever."

"You're going to come back?"

"That's right."

"Then when will you?"

Ummmm..... It'd be okay to say that I'd stay for a week before summer vacation ended, right?

"After 20 days? So during that time, you need to be sure to guard the house well."

Baduk nodded her head at my words and, making it unbelievable that she was crying just a moment ago, had her eyes filled with resolution and looked at me as she spoke.

"Yes! I'll protect it for sure!"

"Yeah, aren't you a good girl."

I was petting Baduk like that when suddenly,

“The young master is truly a lolicon.”

“Heek?!”

I was totally surprised when I heard Saehee’s voice from behind my back. (I gave up on caring that Saehee calls me a lolicon.) Ra, rather than a phantom, don’t you have the characteristics of a ghost? Looking at Saehee in the middle of the day absorbing sunlight made her seem even less like a human. Ah, she’s not a human. Anyway, she was carrying a black travelling bag with two hands.

Huh?

“.....So it’s not a bindle?”

“Following common sense, I believe it would be strange to carry a bindle in this day and age.”

.....Sorry. I honestly thought you would pack things up in a bindle. But the thing is.....,

“Then, does that mean those clothes aren’t weird to you?”

“This is my preference.”

Ah, yeah. Since it’s your preference, I’ll respect it.

“So where did Miss Rangii go?”

At my words, Saehee turned around and looked at the house’s roof. My eyes naturally went to that direction as well.

I got goosebumps on my back.

There was something there I wasn't able to see, no wait. Totally different from how she is originally, Rangii was standing seriously, looking adamant and proud. It was clearly a small, cute child's form, but she seemed to be wider than the sky, heavier than a mountain, and deeper than the ocean, an appearance just like that of a character from a myth.

.....What am I thinking of while looking at Rangii?

More importantly, what is she doing there? What'll she do if she falls and hurts herself? I opened my mouth to warn her, but,

“Then, please excuse me for a moment.”

Is what she said and then Saehee blocked my ears so I had to stop myself from talking. And then.....

[-----!!]

A tiger's fierce roar, indescribable in words, spread through the heavens and the earth. I could see it going through the earth and vibrating the ground. I would have collapsed if Baduk hadn't grabbed me from behind, and I would have blacked out if Saehee hadn't blocked my ears.

Wha, what was that? Did something just happen? Saehee took her hands off my ears. I forced open my inexplicably dry lips.

“J, just now..... What was that?”

“For Master, it is similar to a farewell. There is no need for you to know.”

Farewell? You're saying that that's a farewell? But to me it sounded like she was threatening something? Did I hear it wrong? Do all tiger's roars feel like that? My head was filled with those kinds of thoughts when, without my realizing, Rangii

had come down from the roof, approached me, and grabbed my hand.

“Did you wait long?”

“.....No.”

Seeing her innocent expression, I felt that I somehow had misinterpreted it. I guess tiger's roars are always like that. Rangii nodded at my words and spoke to Baduk, who until just this second was acting as my legs.

“Then, Shin-ah. Please take care of the house.”

“Yes, Master.”

“Shin-ah?”

Wasn't her name Baduk? As I was thinking that, the kind Saehee graciously explained it to me.

“That is Baduk's name which she was blessed with by heaven. Simply put, you can consider it to be her true name.”

“Is it something important?”

Saehee nodded her head.

“More important than one's own life. Carelessly using such a name will result in the speaker getting murdered without excuse. Although we have only just met, I hope you go to a better place.”

“.....Am I being murdered?”

Is Baduk going to transform into her original form and bite my head off?

“It's okay, young master.”

Whether Baduk read my thoughts or not, Baduk casually walked in front of me and spoke.

“Because the young master is the one who will become Master’s husband it is okay. If a normal human had said such a thing, I would have bitten him and rolled him around in my mouth.”

Husband, I’ve never heard the word said so magnificently.

“Yeah, okay. That’s a relief.”

“Tsk.”

Did you just ‘tsk’ at me? Actually, I won’t argue. In this world, pretending to not notice something is the better solution for many problems. Just then, I heard a car pull up outside the front gate.

“Then I’m going.”

“Good bye, Master. Young master, please return soon. And Saehee, please take care as well.”

As I received Baduk's farewell, I went out the front gate. Saehee followed right behind me, and Rangii also was..... No, she was standing in front of the gate, completely lost in thought. This brat. Does she really not want to leave? Although there's the seal, it's probably because she's leaving a place she's lived for over 4,000 years.

.....There's no helping it. It's not like me, but I guess it'll be okay to just push her a little.

Since I need to survive.

“Rangii.”

“Hunyak?!”

Rangii was completely surprised, let out a cutesy voice, and all the hair on her body bristled upwards. .....Are you a cat? I gave Nyangii, no. Rangii my hand.

“Let’s go.”

“.....Yeah!”

Although she was hesitant for a moment, she quickly smiled widely and grabbed my hand. I opened the door and Rangii entered first, then I went in.

But Saehee had no plans to enter the car. Are you going to ride in the front? is what I was going to ask, but she was looking off somewhere and both corners of her mouth rose into a frightening smile and after seeing Saehee my mouth stayed still.

Wh, what are you smiling like that for? I stuck my head out to see what Saehee was looking at, but all I could see was the tree’s shade shaking in the wind.

“.....What’s wrong?”

“A cute few are talking amongst themselves as they watch us leaving.”

Rangii’s in the car. .....that was a bad joke.

“What is it?”

“It was three bears.”

A familiar children’s song echoed in my head in reaction. [\[17\]](#)

“They may have come to avenge the papa bear.”

“The father bear died?!”

“It is okay. The mama bear is still alive.”

.....I need to get them out of here to protect the ecosystem. Since the black bear family will probably end up in phantoms' stomachs.

“My apologies. If you wish to eat them, I will prepare them very quickly.”

“It's fine.”

“It is likely they will follow us up to Seoul, so serving them as a meal would be very simple.”

Saehee's jokes were always scary because they never seem like one.

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### Notes:

1. One of the most historically important mountains in all of Korea.<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jirisan> ↵

2. Traditional Korean garment that is freaking hot in the summer.<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanbok> ↵

3. A traditional ornament on hanboks that look like tassels.

↖

4. Meant to be a Korean equivalent of “たのもう!” When the nobles of Joseon visit one another's home, they would say this as a greeting to ask for a housekeeper who would then lead the visitor to the master of the

household

←

5. More specifically, Shukuchi.

←

6. A Korean Robin Hood.

←

7. A Korean mythological figure who's known to be the founder of ancient Korea, from the Dangun mythologies. The important part is the story of the tiger and the bear: Hwanung presented them with a trial to survive on nothing but mugwort and garlic for a hundred days in a cave if they wanted to become human. The tiger gave up halfway and the bear persisted, becoming the first female human being.

←

8. The torso part of the hanbok.

←

9. “Baduk” is historically one of the most common dog names, overused to the point of it showing up as actual textbook example dog names in Korean language studies.

←

10. An era in Korean history from 1392 to 1897.

←

11. -nim indicates respect. Is obviously being used ironically.

←

12. Rangii speaks in an old form of Korean. She all of a sudden changes it to modern Korean when Sunghoon turns her around.

←

13. Literally "tiger": 호랑이

←

14. 齊天大聖 . "Great Sage, Equal of Heaven." Monkey King Sun Wukong's title.

←

15. Korean style of eating pork.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bossam\\_%28food%29](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bossam_%28food%29) ←

16. Alteration on "Not even a dog should be bothered in the middle of a meal." Replacing idioms involving dogs with Baduk will happen fairly often from here on out!

←

17. Korean song many children learn. Called “Gom Se Mari” or the “3 Bears Song” ←

## 02. Second Story

If anyone asks, this is a very pure and innocent story about raising a baby tiger.

*Translator: Dijon*

*Editor: Narane*

*Hi guys, Dijon here. This translation took more-or-less 3 months. My goal is to finish volume 1 by some time in August or September. Let's hope I meet my pseudo-deadline!*

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### 02. Second Story

Unlike my plan to go back home on a bus, instead of dropping us off at the terminal, the car went down the mountain and it passed the terminal and went somewhere else. I knew this when the car entered the freeway.

Are you thinking that I noticed way too late? But I don't think so?

"Sunghoon, Sunghoon! What is that over there?!"

With Rangii occupying the top of my thigh like a tyrant and constantly bombarding me with questions about what was amazing and new to her, it was totally chaotic.

"It's called a train and it's like what we're riding in right now, but the simplest explanation is that a bunch of cars are put together and go on a fixed road."

"Ohhh! So that's what it is!"

Ever since the car took off-- That's amazing! What's this? What's that? Since she

kept asking me things she could've asked Saehee, I didn't have the chance to look away. And because there were fewer new things to look at after entering the freeway, I was able to ask Saehee a question.

"Hey, the thing is, where are we going right now?"

"We are going to the young master's kennel."

I'm not such an impatient man that I'd reply in anger *did you just call my house a kennel?!* Instead, I leaned in towards Saehee and spoke in a hushed voice.

"Isn't this a chauffeur service? Didn't it cost a lot? Do phantoms have a lot of money?"

Saehee ignored my concern for her spending and spoke in her usual tone.

"There is no need to lower your voice, young master. Because the person driving knows our identity."

"Eh?"

Surprised, I looked at the driver. The old driver who initially looked harmless suddenly looked like a middle aged phantom man to me.

"Are phantoms these days able to get driver's licenses?"

"Haha, I'm a normal human."

"What?"

The driver was wholeheartedly laughing and I diverted my eyes to look at Saehee.

"We have lived on this land for over four thousand years. Since ancient times,

the higher-ups of humanity knew of our existence, and they assisted us in various ways."

".....That's a little unexpected."

"Because if we get angered and decide to act, their position would be endangered. Even if I were to **leave my place by Master's side**, doing that much would be child's play."

Isn't it a little subtle to call that assistance?

"You're saying such scary things as easily as ever, Saehee-nim. And that's why we work to create a satisfying environment in the present for the greatest phantoms."

The old man said that while looking completely affable.

"But I've never seen that little kid before today....."

"I'm not a little kid!"

Rangii lost her temper and shouted. She's definitely a little kid. The old man laughed loudly and acknowledged her words.

"Haha, please excuse me, young lady. But what kind of phantom are....."

"When did I say you could question us, human?"

The air stood still at her scornful, critical voice. My body naturally froze as well, and Rangii tapped my arm and teased me. While I was stuck like that, the driver calmly replied.

"Ah, please excuse my rudeness. It seemed like you were in a better mood than usual. Please allow me to focus on driving now."

Please do that, old man. Unlike the old man, I don't have a lot of experience with phantoms so if things like this happen often then my body will end up with problems. Like in my heart. Or like in my heart. Or, like in my heart.

"Saehee, Sunghoon's stuck like this!"

"In times like this, you should caress his body with both your hands."

Ah, I then noticed something. Saehee hasn't called Rangii Master even once until now. Is that why Saehee was intentionally ignoring Rangii's questions since earlier? In case she accidentally called Rangii Master? Is that why she got angry just now as well?

.....The thought 'is Rangii's leaving Jirisan an unexpectedly big deal?' melted away on this summer day as Rangii fidgeted with my chest and stomach with her hands.

"What're you doing right now!"

"Ah, you're back to normal."

Rangii let out an unidentifiable low grumbling sound and leaned her face on my chest.

"Then since Sunghoon's body has gotten smoother, I'm going to try to sleep for a bit."

What's gotten smoother, huh? I've always been a smooth man.

"Sleep when we get there."

"Snoo--ore--."

"So quick?!"

That's too quick! Is she pretending to be asleep? But seeing her right now with her eyes closed, sleeping happily, I'd feel sorry to wake her up even if she was pretending. I have no choice but to leave her be.

I sighed and lowered my voice so I wouldn't wake her up.

"Really, stop being so spoiled."

Rangii's tail danced a little.

Are you really asleep?

Dad is a novelist. He has enough fans to somehow make royalties, but I know he's a terrible author because he hasn't sold many copies and he's too busy just taking care of himself. Thanks to that, we rely on Mom to pay for the majority of the household expenses. Thankfully, Mom has a very high income so my family can afford our own house with a small yard, and we may not be rich, but I thought we were happy in our own way. And so,

"What a tiny house."

Don't say whatever you want about someone's house, you brat. I grabbed Rangii, who just said something incredibly rude, by the ears with my hands and squeezed them hard in a 3/4 beat rhythm.

"You brat, what're you saying about someone's house?"

Of course it's small compared to grandpa's estate, but do you have any idea how hard it is to keep a house like this in the middle of Seoul?

"Ow-ow-ow-ow-ow!! I, I'm weak in my ears!"

It looked really painful so I let go. Rangii protested while touching her ears with both her hands.

"But if Saehee and I are going to live with you and we're going to raise our children as well, it's clearly too small!"

Huh, is that so? Based on what Rangii said, it'd be my family of Dad, Mom, and me, along with Saehee and Rangii, making it five people. Add to that kids and it'd be seven at least, so the house really is small..... No, that's not it!

"There is no need to worry, Master. By then I will have saved up enough for the sake of the young master who is too incompetent to own a house."

That day won't come so there's no need to make such a plan. I pushed aside talking with these weird phantoms for later and rang the doorbell.

Ding dong.

"Whoa! It's making an interesting sound. What is that?"

Rather than answer, I looked at Saehee. Saehee avoided my eyes. She did it naturally enough for me to not realize she was avoiding eye-contact. Does that mean you want me to talk?

"It's called a doorbell. You use it to tell the people in the house that you're there. In your case, it'd be like having a servant say "I'm here" but instead, it's a machine."

"Ah, so that's what it is?"

Rangii nodded and stared at the door.

"But why isn't anyone coming out to meet us?"

That's what I'm saying. Why isn't anyone opening the door? Maybe she had to go out for a bit? It's not that I don't have a key, but it's troublesome to have to take it out. While complaining I opened my backpack, got the key, and opened the front door.

"I guess nobody's home. Let's go in."

"Ah, wait for a bit."

At Rangii's words, I stopped going back into the yard.

"Why?"

"I thought I didn't see any magic on this house that could protect us."

Well of course. There's no way there could be. Or do you want me to get a shaman to do an exorcism?

"So?"

"Isn't it common sense to feel uneasy when it's like this?"

I never even imagined there would be a day when you'd talk about common sense.

"Thus I'll put down the most minimal defense."

While saying that, she plucked out one of her hairs and blew. I felt complete disbelief, and then that disbelief became reality.

This may be sudden, but do you like tigers? Because right now I'm not talking about the tiger phantom who's puffing out her modest chest with an ehem~, but

a real tiger. I like them. They're cool, fearless, and look good. But that's only when they're on TV or in a cage at the zoo, but when a tiger is prowling around my front yard, it's not the same!!

Rooar!!

The tiger roared. At the same time my distracted thoughts flew to the faraway sky, I stopped escaping reality. I put my hands on Rangii's shoulders.

"Hey. If my eyes aren't going bad, then it seems like one of your hairs changed into a tiger."

Rangii nodded her head.

"That's right. This will provide safety."

So that I wouldn't hit Rangii on the head, I repeated the word 'patience' thirty times in my head.

It wasn't enough.

"Ow!"

"What about this is safe?!"

"Why are you hitting me! If anyone comes to our house and tries to do evil things, then this child will....."

"I know BS when I hear it!!"

"Ha-nyak?!"

After bragging, Rangii was surprised by my yelling and caused her hair to stick up.

"How do you think it's okay to keep a tiger in the middle of Seoul?! Did it run away from the zoo? Do you want to go on the nine o'clock news?!"

In the heart of downtown, a tiger showed up! Are you planning on having me with a mosaic covering my face and my voice changed, you brat?!

"S, so this won't do?"

"Of course not!"

"But I thought there were already a lot of tigers in Seoul so one more would be okay....."

Even during the time when Seoul did have a lot of tigers, I think having a tiger act proudly as a guard isn't common sense.

"In this country, a lot of tigers have already died out, okay? If you want to see one, then go to the zoo!"

Rangii's face turned pale.

"N, no way. How did my children end up like this?"

.....Ah, she's a tiger. I didn't think that because she's the same species, she'd be shocked at the tigers dying out. That's my mistake. So with Rangii on the verge of tears, I rubbed her head and spoke in my most comforting voice.

"I, I know that that's terrible, but a lot of things happened. I'll tell you about it when I teach you histo--....."

"In that case, there's no helping it. Even if I must pull out all my hair here, I will have all my children here thrive."

Just who the hell was I worrying about?

"Don't! I said don't!!"

Are you planning on releasing a pack of tigers in Seoul? Also, if you pulled out all your hair and became bald, you'd look....., no, that doesn't matter. Since Rangii's a phantom, there isn't any problem if she changed her appearance.

Although I got a little off topic, I brought our attention back to the tiger that was lying down in the yard with its belly exposed, yawning, and its body spread across the yard.

"More importantly. Do something about that for now. Are you trying to cause me trouble?"

"Hm--mm. Then there's no helping it."

Rangii lowered her body and snapped her fingers. Then where that tiger was just lying down, there was a baby tiger.....

"Now there's very little difference in appearance from a cat. If it's like this, it should....."

"Did you think that'd work!"

I squeezed her ears really hard.

"Awuuu--. Sunghoon's bad. I did this all for you, so why are you bullying me?"

Rangii, who just turned the tiger back into a hair, was embraced in Saehee's chest and staring at me. She looked like a kid who went to her mom, I mean sister, after getting punished so it looked really cute. Although that's really what happened.

"Master. Although it is a pity, the young master is correct."

"But what if....."

"Master."

What's going on. Saehee cut Rangii off.

"Do you remember what the young master said before we arrived here?

Rangii stopped whatever it was she was about to say and nodded. .....What did I say again?

"Thus it is okay for us not to do anything."

Rangii's tail swayed from side to side.

"But isn't Sungsoon a normal human?"

"He is the one who accepted you, Master."

"But still....."

"Is a human's strength not the strength of his heart?"

"Yeah. That's right!"

"But if you are worried, I will lay down some small spells."

At those words Rangii nodded her head.

"Okay."

I feel like they're ignoring me while talking about me directly, so when can I join

the conversation? But the truth is that I don't want to join in. What do you mean, a human's strength is the strength of the heart?

I gave up on joining the foreign world that was their world of conversation and I opened the front door. Two two naturally followed me in.

"I'm baaaack--!"

I intentionally went in loudly, but it was strangely quiet in the house. If Dad were here,

"You brat. You just activated my trap!"

And if Mom were here,

"Well aren't you late, son?"

They would have said something like that, but..... Could it be? I opened the shoe cupboard. Dad's sneakers aren't there. Also Mom's dress shoes! I took off my shoes and entered the living room. My eyes fell on the large sheet of paper on the living room table. I held up the paper and read the message written on it.

"Something urgent came up so I'm leaving the house for a week. I took Dad with me so take good care of the house and have Rangii sleep in my room. And don't go and carelessly make me a grandmother, okay?!"

"I want to quickly become a mother."

I ignored Rangii who was peering over my shoulder and took out my cell phone. Although I thought of Narae the second I opened saw my phone, I should take care of the most urgent problem first. It's not that I'm scared of Narae's reaction, but that terrible....., no, if I, in my everyday life, had accidentally said those things in front of Mom something terrible would happen to me so I should use good words. Since the first thing I'm going to do is call my absent, busy-with-

work mother.

[The number you have called is currently out of range.....]

How far away do you have to be for the signal not to reach? I called Dad.

[The phone you are calling is currently off so please record your.....]

"Why do you look so frustrated?"

Rangii said that while poking me in the belly. You can only say that because you don't know the crappy situation that I'm in.

"Because the young master's father and mother are not here so he is thinking of doing wicked things to you while you two are alone."

"I'm not, okay? And you're here too!"

"Am I also a target?"

"Don't make such a hateful face at someone! That's actually hurtful!"

"Understood, young master."

I never thought I'd live to see the day when I'd find Saehee's expressionless face to be a show of warmth and kindness.

"Then I shall go unpack the luggage."

Saehee held the bag with both hands and walked past me. *Hey, how do you know where Mom's room is when this is probably the first time you've been here?* was what I was thinking when Saehee opened a door and entered a room. But that isn't Mom's room.

"Hey! That's my room!"

And she quickly retorted to stop me,

"I know."

And after Saehee said something that made her seem like someone who committed a premeditated crime,

"Because there is the strong stench of chestnut flower coming from this room."

She just stomped on a delicate pubescent boy's emotions.

"Wha, wha, what are you saying!"

"Why would there be the smell of chestnut flowers? Are you growing a chestnut tree in your room?"

How should I respond to Rangii when she has a question mark above her head and she asked that so innocently? That was clearly a useless worry.

"When a man becomes sexually aroused he....."

"He--ey! Have sex-ed when you two are by yourselves!"

Why the hell is she saying this in front of me?!

"Hiding things like this is how one becomes a sexual deviant like the young master."

I prepared my already-stomped-on pubescent boy's emotions as a weapon to fight against Saehee who said something so ridiculous with such persuasion.

"It's not something to hide, but it's not something to talk so openly about

either!"

"What's wrong? What in the world are you talking about for your face to get so red?"

In the midst of this chaos, only Rangii could look back and forth at Saehee and me with such a naive expression on her face. This is terrible. For now I should at least avoid this.

"The room that you two are sharing is my mom's room over there, so don't just unpack wherever you want!"

I pointed at my mother's room, located in the corner away from my own room.

"I'm going to go wash my face or something while you unpack, so don't do anything funny."

I kindly took Saehee's bag, put it in Mom's room, and went to the bath..... no, I was going to go when Rangii was staring intently at me. And so, I figured I had to talk to her.

"What?"

I thought she was going to ask if she could use the bathroom first or something, but what she said made what I thought completely laughable, shocking me.

"Why do you constantly wash away your scent so pointlessly?"

".....What?"

"Isn't it inconvenient to wash your scent off?"

".....Explain to me what's so inconvenient about it."

"Your scent is used as a warning to those in your territory."

Ah, so that's what she meant.

I realized that my impression of Rangii up until now was mistaken. I had thought she was a kid who didn't know anything about the world, but she isn't a kid. She's just an animal. A wild tiger.

I never imagined she wouldn't understand the concept of bathing.

"I'm going to ask you one thing. So you didn't wash yourself last night?"

"Do I have to?"

"Okay. That's enough."

With Rangii's shining eyes looking up at me, I gave up on talking to her about this and decided to speak to her guardian.

"Saeheeee!!"

At my scream, Saehee stuck just her head out of my mom's room and replied while looking at me.

"What is wrong, young master?"

"Teach her the importance of bathing! Right now, immediately!"

"As I have no need to bathe, I am unaware of the importance of bathing."

Hey, is that something for a woman to say? Ah, the truth is that if you just looked at her age, she's a super....."

"Young master? I must inform you that it is very easy for me to understand what

you are thinking in your wrinkleless brain."

She's a psychic. She's a freaking psychic.

"Whatever, just bathe Rangii!"

"The young master can do it."

"But you can."

"I am busy. And also....."

Saehee spoke with the most serious face I had ever seen.

"If I get water on me, my body gets wet."

Ah, that's true. I understood. So I'm the one who has to wash Rangii. There's no helping it. Then..... wait, that's not it.

"The heck does that mean!"

"If I make contact with water, my body gets wet."

Obviously you're going to get wet if you touch water!

"No, I mean what are you trying to say."

"That if I touch water, I get excited."

OK. I now understand what she's saying.

"Is that a pun?"

"It is the truth."

Maybe I should get a water bottle and pour it on her.

"And so, I shall continue what I was doing."

Saehee's head went back into the room. I can't force her to do something she hates so much. It's not because I'm scared of her staring at me expressionlessly and threatening me.

But even if Rangii's a tiger, at this age she probably knows how to bathe herself. On the off chance, I spoke to Rangii.

"Do you know how to bathe yourself?"

"I took a bath often in my spiritual form. First I put spit on my front paws like this....."

I grabbed Rangii's arms after she licked her hands and lowered them. As a human being, as a civilized man, I couldn't bear to allow this to continue.

"I understand. Then does that mean you've never bathed in human form?"

"Yeah! How'd you know?"

I did not want to know this fact. That I would have to bathe her in the end. But no matter what Rangii truly is, right now she's a girl. Something about having a high schooler bathe a kid who looks like she's in the third grade is dangerous. At the same time, if I don't then she won't bathe herself when she's in human form. Or I could actually let her groom herself like a cat. That..... isn't okay.

Yeah. I should think of it like that. I'm not giving a little girl a bath, I'm giving a tiger that hates baths a bath. Yeah. She may look like a girl, but on the inside she's a tiger..... no, I am bathing Rangii.

I am giving a tiger a bath.

Great.

I went behind Rangii's back and lifted her up by putting my arms through her armpits. Rangii's tail stuck fast to her belly.

"Wha, what are you doing?"

"Giving a bath."

"To whom?"

"To you."

"Ehhh? Why're you doing this all of a sudden? I don't need a bath."

"Okay, okay. But I do, so just wash with me."

"Sae, Saehee! Say something to Sunghoon too!"

Saehee didn't answer. Ah, it's hard to keep her up when she's struggling.

"Stay still, you brat."

"This is just a spiritual body so I don't need a bath!"

Hm? That's only enough to persuade yourself.

"Despite being a spiritual body, the spiritual bodies of great phantoms such as you are already similar to physical bodies, Master. Your body will get dirty just like a human's."

Unprompted words came from the room. With her fur on edge, Rangii shouted

back."

"Saehee, damn you! Are you betraying your master?!"

"This is for your sake, Master."

"But I don't want toooo!!"

There's no answer. So you're ignoring the words of Rangii, your master? Isn't this way too sudden? For whatever reason, by her current attitude, it looks like Saehee really doesn't want to give Rangii a bath even though she needs a bath. There's nothing to consider. I could tell Rangii was furious at Saehee's betrayal so I rushed to the bathroom while holding Rangii. I locked the door and took off my clothes after putting Rangii down. Rangii was watching me do that with a sullen look on her face.

"What're you doing? Are you going to take a bath with your clothes on?"

".....Why is everyone around me trying to make me miserable?"

"We're not trying to make you miserable, we're doing this because we care about you. And just so you know, I hate women who don't bathe."

"Uuu--."

I easily ignored Rangii who was puffing her cheeks out and spoke.

"More importantly, get undressed."

".....Isn't showing your naked body to others embarrassing?"

After what happened before, that's not really for you to say.

"If a girl your age had something called common sense then I'd be embarrassed.

But right now I don't see you as a girl, but an animal, so there's no problem."

Although with me standing tall, naked with nothing covered, someone else seeing me say that would view me as a pervert.

"That's something you said to hurt my feelings again."

That's the truth, but what do you want me to do about it.

Whether Rangii gave up on arguing or not, she started to take off her clothes piece by piece.

"Put your clothes on top of the drawer."

"Okay."

While Rangii was undressing, I turned on the water and got the temperature right. Well, it's summer so it should be okay for it to be a little lukewarm. And when I got it right,

"I took everything off."

I heard Rangii's voice. Just like when we first met, when I turned around I saw Rangii standing with not a single piece of clothes on her. She loosened her hair braid and let her hair down, covering all the necessary parts and it felt strange. But because of that, the thing called human imagination was unneedingly active. ....Well, since the one I'm looking at is Rangii, it doesn't really mean anything.

By the parts of her skin not covered by her white hair that shined like silver, her skin could definitely be called that of a child's. It's like a baby's. Like if I went ahh- and bit her softly, my teeth-marks would be clearly visible on her delicate skin. That aside, I was a little surprised to find that Rangii actually had curves. Her chest is small, but towards her hips it dipped in and her butt was a bit more....., I mean, so what if I was appreciating staring at her body.

"What am I supposed to do now?"

"Now....."

I was about to say *sit down* when I realized something. That there's only one bath stool in the bathroom. I can't let her sit on the floor, and it'd feel off to stay standing. I'm naked so if I stayed standing while washing then my *big magnum*..... I mean, then Rangii might touch my important bit since she's sitting. If I had known it was going to end up like this, I would've at least brought a towel. No, going this far and choosing one of those would mean defeat. I don't really know what kind of defeat it would be, but it'd still be defeat. I'm going to bathe this naked girl while I'm naked. But I don't feel embarrassed. It's not even weird. She's just a simple tiger!

.....Yeah. She's Rangii. A tiger. There's nothing to be embarrassed about!

"I'm going to bathe you, so sit here."

I spoke while slapping my thigh.

"You mean there?"

"Why?"

".....I often ask myself what kind of person you are."

And I have absolutely no idea what kind of phantom you are.

Rangii approached me slowly and went on top of my thigh with her back to me.

"Am I okay like this?"

"For now."

But you brat, why're you keeping your legs spread? Given the way the human body is designed, it's natural for her to keep her legs spread when she's sitting on top of my thigh, but it feels like something about this posture is dangerous.....

Meh, whatever. I should just think about bathing this brat for now.

I turned on the water from the showerhead above Rangii's head and.....

"Ahwa?!"

With her fur on edge and her tail sticking straight out, she let out a scream-like sound.

"It's hot!"

You mean this is hot? But I think I made it quite lukewarm? Could it be because kids' skin is weak? I made the water a little colder.

"Is this okay?"

"Y, yeah. It's okay."

What a relief. But her hair is long so looks like she catches colds easily. I pumped out the shampoo a few times and rubbed it over her hair.

"What are you doing?"

"I'm going to wash your hair so close your eyes. It'll sting if it gets in your eyes."

I didn't hear Rangii's reply, but started rubbing her hair. Bubbles rose from her hair and I moved the suds across the whole of her head, washing the tips of her hair as well.

"It smells weird."

"I told you to close your eyes."

I moved my hands back to her hair and thinking about giving her a scalp massage, I pressed against her head.

"Uwaaa--. It feels really good."

"That's a relief."

Rangii totally relaxed her body and leaned her back against my chest. Thanks to that it got a lot harder to wash her hair. But still, it didn't feel bad. Because she's leaning on me and entrusting her body to my hands. It's better than her jumping around.

I more-or-less washed her hair so now all that's left are her strange ears, but..... I figured it'd be okay to wash them just like her hair. But when I pressed against the base of her ears, I triggered an incident.

"U--nyaa?! I, I'm sensitive there-- Kyaheeng! Eyes! My eyes! It stings, it stiiings!"

She opened her eyes in surprise and in a 2-hit combo, the shampoo went in her eyes-- and with Rangii struggling on top of me, I wasn't able to keep her steady so I fell flat on my butt. Oh, ow. Without even the time to be in pain, I grabbed Rangii's hands as she rubbed her stinging, painful eyes while on top of my pelvis. You still have shampoo on your hands, so rubbing your eyes will only make it worse! It looks like Rangii understood my thoughts differently.

"Uwaaang--. Sunghoon is, Sunghoon is being evil--. Uwaang--."



Just now, the area she's sitting on is an extremely evil area.

If someone saw me like this, I'd commit suicide.

"Don't say something that's so easy to misunderstand!"

I grabbed onto Rangii's hips while she was crying, lifted her body, and turned on the water. I poured water on Rangii's face with the showerhead and rubbed her eyes with my hand. And then Rangii stopped crying. Whew, looks like I stopped the most urgent problem for now. To prevent a second disaster, I flipped the hair that was over her face back and spoke.

"Hey, you brat. I told you not to open your eyes."

I could see Rangii puffing out her cheeks through the reflection in the mirror.

"It's not my fault! You were the one who thoughtlessly touched the bottom of my ears, weren't you?!"

"Making such a fuss about touching your ears? You must be the only person-- I mean, you must be the only phantom who's like that."

"When we change into human form we become sensitive there, so what you said is wrong, Sungsoon!"

.....Is that so? So that's universal in phantoms. I gained even more useless information.

"Okay. I'm sorry, so let's rinse your hair. Make sure to keep your eyes shut. If you open them, it'll sting just like before."

"O, okay."

Maybe because the soapy water getting in her eyes was pretty painful, she had her entire body tensed up while keeping her eyes shut tight.

It wasn't something to be so scared about.

I brought the showerhead above Rangii's head again. I rinsed her hair with my hand to wash out all the shampoo. Great, this should be enough. I moved Rangii's hair back again.

"You can open your eyes now."

"Huwa--. Taking a bath in human form feels unexpectedly good!"

"Well that's a relief."

"Please do this for me tomorrow as well."

"Today is one day, tomorrow is a different one."

"What does that mean?"

It means I won't care whose body gets wet or not tomorrow.

"More importantly, I washed your hair so now let's wash your body."

"Hm? We're not done?"

"Were you planning on leaving after only washing your hair?"

You need to wash your body too.

I wetted the shower towel, pushed on the pump multiple times to get body shampoo, and created a lather. It could've been because she had her eyes closed, but Rangii was staring at the bubbles, totally intrigued.

"It's very pretty. What is that?"

How should I explain what this is?

"Soap bubbles. You rub this on yourself when you're taking a bath."

I explained using vocabulary on the level of an elementary schooler's.

"So these are called soap bubbles? It's so interesting how they don't disappear as quickly as water bubbles."

Rangii reached out her hands and took a lot of bubbles, playing with them.

Maybe she liked the slippery texture of the bubbles, but she went *ehehe*, and laughed like a little kid. No, she wasn't laughing like a little kid; she is a little kid laughing. I blew on the soap and while Rangii was preoccupied with the bubbles flying from her hands, I grabbed Rangii's arm and rubbed the shower towel against her arm.

"Unyak?!"

Hm? Why'd she suddenly shout out like that? Rangii grimaced and pulled back her arm then she turned her head back and looked up at me.

"What are you doing all of a sudden?! It hurts!"

".....But you're taking a bath."

"Then why was it so painful?"

No, no. It couldn't have been painful. It's not like she's taking a shower after surgery. I rubbed the shower towel against my arm. It's nothing. I grabbed Rangii's wrist again and pushed it softly.

"Ow-ow-ow! Didn't I tell you it hurt?!"

Rangii's skin turned red.

.....Is this for real? Can I really believe that her skin is so weak that rubbing a shower towel softly against her is enough to make her skin go red? What kind of a phantom's skin is like this? I thought, if she was stabbed with a blade, then maybe she'd go, *ah, that'd leave a mark*. Isn't that how they are?

".....Sorry."

"Why are you scrubbing my body with the tool that makes soap bubbles? Isn't it obvious that it would hurt if you do that?"

"No, this isn't the thing that makes soap bubbles. It's called a shower towel, and after making the bubbles, you wash yourself with this."

Rangii was shocked.

"You mean you wash your body with something so rough? There's no way. Is that a lie meant to tease me?"

"What would I get out of teasing you?"

The doubt in her eyes isn't disappearing. Hey, what the heck do you think I've done to you? I rubbed the shower towel ostentatiously against my arm. She still had her eyes narrowed. I then rubbed it slightly against my chest and neck in a showy manner as well. That was when Rangii's suspicion went away.

"It seems you weren't lying. But I cannot rub my body with something so rough."

".....Can't you just bear with it? There's the saying that you only become an adult after pain, after all."

"I'm already an adult!"

No, you're clearly a kid.

"Also, look!"

Rangii protested while showing me her red forearm.

"If I bathe using that shower towel then my body will turn red like this, won't it? I don't want to show such an ugly sight to my future husband! It's not because it hurts at all!"

A great phantom that has lived for over four thousand years is throwing a

tantrum because of the pain while taking a bath. Seriously, it's laughable that this is the tiger from the myths.

But still, Rangii has a point. If it hurt to take a bath, I'd also not want to take one. When I was a kid, I was scared of my dad's scrubbing towel [1]. Since it's come to this, I should just wash her by hand.....

.....Huh? Oh, yeah. I could do that too, can't I?

"Then there's no helping it."

Rangii's tail began to wag. Hey. It tickles. Stop.

"Then....."

"I'm going to wash you by hand."

"Eh?"

Rangii was stunned, and I spoke to her while openly while rubbing bubbles on my hands.

"You're okay with that, right?"

"N, no. There's no need to go that far, isn't there?"

"I have a bad feeling that if I don't take this opportunity to teach you how to properly wash yourself then something seriously terrible will happen."

It doesn't seem like this brat's going to stay here for more than a day or two so, I need to take this opportunity to educate her. For something like this, once should be enough.

"B, but touching with your hands? Isn't something like that embarrassing?"

She sure picked a weird time to care about that when she's sitting on my thigh, naked.

"I'm not embarrassed."

Because the one before me is Rangii. Yeah. That's right. I'm doing this to a tiger, to Rangii. She's a massive tiger phantom whose true form is Jirisan. .....I kind of have the feeling that I'm convincing myself on the level of brainwashing, but there's no problem with that because it's the truth. Yeah. Absolutely no problems. If there aren't any, then there really aren't. Don't think about it.

But what was I just thinking about? Ah, it was rubbing soap on Rangii's body.

I started rubbing soap on Rangii with my hands.

"Uk."

Rangii was shaking and her fur was spiked up. Her hatred of bathing is almost on the level of a cat's. With the utmost care, I stroked her body. Starting with her hands, I moved to her arms then her armpits.

"Kyahahaha, it tickles!"

"Ah, sorry."

I went past her shoulder and around her neck to rub the opposite side. I got more bubbles then put them on her back.

"Uu--heek?"

I was touching her spine, and she let out a weird sound.

"What's wrong?"

"Something's strange."

"What is?"

"Even though I thought I would hate this, your hands feel strangely good and it's making me shout out. Was taking a bath always supposed to be like this?"

"Well, I heard somewhere that taking a bath is the washing machine for the soul."

Even though I forgot where I heard this.

".....This might become a habit."

"Then I would be thankful."

I got more bubbles and this time I rubbed them on the front. When I about to touch her chest, I stopped without thinking, but I moved my hands again almost immediately. I'm not doing anything weird, and all I'm doing is bathing the adorable Rangii so there's nothing weird about it. Yeah.

I feel like I got the core concept wrong, but I'll just ignore it. I get the feeling that if I remember what's wrong, I'll have to cross a river I can't return from.

"Uu--heek?"

Her tail went completely straight, bothering my chin.

"What, does it tickle?"

Rangii bowed her head as her face turned bright red.

"Y, yeah."

But even though they're really small, she really does have breasts. But for her belly to be softer than her breasts, how should I put it, I guess I'm a little sad. There, I put soap on her belly and hips so now below that is.....

No, no. No matter how much I think Rangii is a tiger, there's no way. No way. I could do it, but if there's something that I shouldn't do, it's this, and I absolutely cannot.

I leaned her back against my chest, hugged her with both arms while she was disoriented, and put her down by my side.

"There. Wash yourself like that and do the rest yourself."

".....You're not going to do the other places?"

Why do you sound so disappointed?

"I need to bathe myself too. Here, this is the body shampoo. If you press the thing on the top then the water that makes bubbles will come out, so rub that on your hands and wash yourself."

"Okay."

Rangii started washing herself with the soap. As a dad, I'm happy-- no, that's not it. I'm proud that Rangii learned something. Could this be what's called a paternal pride?

Paternal or whatever, I should just wash myself for now. I put soap on my whole body and washed it off with water when Rangii, covered in soap, put her slippery butt on top of my thigh. I couldn't even say anything about Rangii insisting that my thigh was hers. .....I want to think that I was overlooking her cute behavior since she was bathing so well after hating it, but man.

"Why're you looking over here?"

"I like looking over here more."

Today I'm generous.

"Do as you please."

"Heheh."

Well, I might like this.

After Rangii was done, I dried her with a towel, and after I put on underwear and pants, I looked for clothes for Rangii until I realized that she wouldn't have brought her own.

"Wait there for a bit."

After basically giving her the command *stay*, I opened the bathroom door and called for Saehee..... What're you doing there?

".....Hey, didn't you say you were busy?"

"Where are you looking, young master? As you can see, I am busy."

Saehee was sitting on the sofa, watching a cartoon on the TV. If she were just watching TV I wouldn't have gotten this upset, but in her hand was one of my dad's favorite bottles of plum wine, and scattered atop the table were two or so completely empty bottles of plum wine. And as she was saying that, she brought the bottle up to drink.

.....So, what did you say? You're busy?

"Your business aside, don't you look quite comfortable?"

"I need information on how the world has changed. My knowledge is already outdated by three years. Ah, this manhwa is funny."

She looks like she's finished all her work and is lounging like an old la....."

"And so."

She's like a psychic as usual.

"Why did you call for me, young master?"

Seeing her expressionless face completely devoid of any intoxication despite drinking two bottles of plum wine, I unconsciously became less upset. Could I be at the bottom of the food chain in this house?

".....Whatever, just give me clothes for Rangii."

"Understood."

Saehee got up from the sofa, went into Mom's room, and brought out the exact same clothes that Rangii was just wearing, from the same design to the same colors. If I don't react to that then I won't be able to survive.

"Is that all the clothes she has?"

"This makes it easier to animate."

".....The heck does that mean?"

"It is something from a manhwa I just read."

Please, I'm just wishing that she doesn't gain any weird knowledge. I got the clothes from Saehee and turned to look at Rangii. And there.....

"...Hm? What's wrong?"

Rangii was playing with the underwear that I had worn before.

"Hey. You're not supposed to put that on your head! And you're not supposed to put your arm through there either! It's not food, either, so don't put it in your mouth!!"

"I, I know."

"If you know, then don't!"

"I just did it because I was curious."

"What're you curious about?"

Rangii looked away. She isn't saying anything. So her being curious was a lie.

".....Let's just get you dressed for now."

I handed Rangii the clothes Saehee gave me, and Rangii just blinked her shining eyes and stared at me. Don't tell me.....

"Do you not know how to dress yourself?"

"There's really nothing that you *don't* know about me, isn't there?"

Seeing how happy Rangii was, my heart sank. It's only been two days, but I already know more-or-less what kind of kid she is. She's a kid who never received any education on everyday tasks. I opened the bathroom door and shouted for Rangii's guardian.

"Saeheeeee!"

I can't even remember how many times I've yelled her name.

Saehee, the educator and caretaker of Rangii, didn't even look away from the TV and answered.

"Did I not tell you I was busy? Have you already forgotten?"

"Don't give me that! How busy can you be if you're watching TV while drinking?!"

"I am busy."

Seeing Saehee drink from the bottle made a fire rage from within my body, and was threatening to burst out. I was about to argue back at her, when,

"Is Saehee drinking alcohol?"

Rangii asked from behind me. Great. I should use Rangii. Even if she looks like a kid, she's a great tiger phantom and master of Saehee who's giving ridiculous excuses.

"Then that means she's really busy."

But Rangii betrayed my expectation beautifully.

".....What?"

"Saehee uses the energy from alcohol to do tiresome tasks. Saehee only ever drinks when she has to do stuff like that, so right now she must be really busy. You shouldn't bother her about something so trivial."

Getting you dressed isn't trivial to me.

"Thank you very much, Master."

Saehee glanced from the side at me with a smile. Ah, for some reason I feel like I've lost. I should just give up. A pack of Baduks..... I mean of dogs will stick together, so phantoms must have each other's backs too. I sighed

"Can you put that on your..... no, nevermind. I'm wishing for too much from a kid who has underwear on her head."

"I, I was just curious!"

"Like I said, about what?"

Rangii blushed and kept silent.

"Alright, so I'll get you dressed."

"Okay."

I mostly looked away as I got her dressed. Even so, I found that her clothes are incredibly soft and light. What the heck is it made from? If I get the chance, I'll ask her later. I didn't know how to braid her hair so I decided to just leave it. It shouldn't be a big problem. Right now, my empty stomach comes first.

"Let's eat dinner."

"Food?"

Rangii's eyes were sparkling. Her tail was moving like a wave.

"If you are finished, masters, I shall prepare dinner."

Saehee just downed another drink and I got a little curious at her words.

"But what're you doing right now?"

"I cannot answer."

"What are you, a celebrity who wants to be famous for being mysterious?"

"Don't worry. **Everything Saehee does benefits me in the end.**"

That *in the end* part bothers me. In this world, the means to the ends are often the most important steps.

Anyway, I don't know if she's doing any work or not, but Saehee is so generously making dinner for us, so I might as well look to see what side dishes we have. I went grocery shopping the day before going to the countryside, so we should still have the ingredients. I opened the refrigerator door.

There's nothing. It's empty. There's only kimchi, water, and plum wine. I closed the door. I'm thinking about how this could have happened.

Mom. There's no way a huge eater like her would leave anything. But eating three peoples' portions of food in one day seems excessive. Throwing curses at the general direction that Mom is at won't change anything, though.

Yeah. I'm a man who's prepared for the unexpected. If we're all out of groceries, I just need to buy some. I have a credit card that's used for domestic things like this.

"I'm going to go to the supermarket for a bit."

Rangii's ears pricked up.

"Are you going to the market?"

"Yeah."

I have a bad feeling.

"I want to go too!"

Please think about it. If I take you grocery shopping while holding your hand, I'd feel like an old mother.

"I'll only be gone for a little, so just wait here."

"Ehhh, I don't want to! I want to go too! I want to see how this world has changed with my own eyes!"

Rangii grabbed my hand and was jumping up and down in a tantrum. Ahh, having a kid throwing a tantrum even though I'm so young makes me feel like a housewife..... No, I should think more positively. Yeah. Considering she's my young bride, going shopping with her makes me feel like a husband..... That's complete crap. The only wife for me is Narae.

Ah. I just realized that I need to call Narae. If it's now, her anger should have died down, right? Maybe I should call her today. .....I mean, after I deal with Rangii who's sticking to me like glue.

"Yeah. Let's go, let's go. We can just go together."

"Hehehe."

Rangii was smiling and sticking next to me. With Rangii's belly up against me, I unknowingly rubbed her head. I mean, it's because she's cute. Seriously.

"Ah, hide your tail and ears for now. You can hide them, right?"

Rangii turned her head away.

"Why do I have to do that? I'm proud of these....."

"If you can't, you'll have to stay here."

"Uu--uu."

I regretted taking Rangii grocery shopping with me 5 minutes after we had left the house.

"Sunghoon, Sunghoon! What is that? The power of lightning is running through that column!"

"It's called a utility pole. It brings electricity to every house through a wire....."

"Wow. What's this black thing? Is it a curse meant to weaken the power of the earth?"

"What do you mean a curse? It's called asphalt, and it's meant to make travelling more comfortable for people or cars."

"Amazing! I never imagined that humans would disregard the natural order to such an extent!"

"That said, you seem pretty happy. Shouldn't you be sad in this case?"

"Why do you say that?"

Rangii's beautifully braided hair quickly unraveled and formed into a question mark.

"Please act like a human when you're on the street."

"Isn't that why I hid my splendid ears and tail?"

Yeah. Her white tail and ears were hidden, so Rangii just looks like an adorable little girl in eye-catching clothes and..... it would be so great if I could say that. Just the color of her hair was attracting attention from pedestrians. Isn't having white, nearly silver hair with black stripes abnormal? And add to that her cuteness.

Her interesting hair color attracted the gazes of pedestrians, and her cute appearance kept their eyes on her. People would even turn around, stop in their tracks, or say things like *she's so cute~ I want to take a picture~ I want to touch her~* before leaving. Thank God no one actually did any of this stuff.

With Rangii already attracting so much attention, just the thought of her making a question mark with her hair is terrible.

"Because even like this you're attracting attention."

"What does that mean, I'm attracting attention?"

When Rangii tilted her head and looked up at me, I think the people, who for some reason were following us, shouted out *kyaa* or *uwaa*. .....I'll ignore them.

"Hm? Sunghoon, what's wrong?"

She asked me while pulling on my hand.

"Am, am I dying of moe?"

"Hawu~. I want to take her with me~."

I can't hear them. I'll ignore them. I said I can't hear them. If I let this continue, something bad really may happen, so I should tell her the truth.

"It's because you're cute."

"Because you're cute.....?"

Rangii suddenly went *poof!* and emitted smoke after she heard what I said. I'm telling you this beforehand, but that was a figure of speech. Her face went bright red and she spoke.

"Did, did you just say that I'm cute?"

"Yeah. You're attracting attention because you're cute, so don't do any....."

I wasn't able to finish what I was saying. Because Rangii jumped up with unbelievable strength and hugged her two arms around my neck.

"I'm happy! I'm so happy! You've finally fallen for my charm!"

It looks like you've totally fallen for a delusion.

"The hell's that guy?"

"Should we kill him?"

"Lolicon bastard."

Y-you too.

I don't know what these delusional people might do if this continues. Hey, hey. All of your eyes are scary. For now, we should run away for fear of our safety. I hugged Rangii, held her to my side,

"Uraaa!!"

And I ran.

It feels like I've been sprinting a lot these days.

It was right after I was able to escape from Rangii's impromptu fanclub that I realized. I had passed the usual supermarket I go to where I collected a lot of points. .....and this is all because of Rangii. Let's see if I go shopping with you again.

The cause of this situation was already on her feet and let out a carefree response.

"That was fun!"

"Ah, was it?"

I was about to die from exhaustion. Well, it wasn't Rangii's fault that I had to run like this so there's no helping it..... or is there? The problem is whether Rangii's at fault here or not, but I'll just think it's not. Yeah. Because that's the only way my sanity can endure this.

Moving on, it looks like I'm going to just go to the nearest market here and take empty back roads back home. Because otherwise I'll probably have to hold her and run like that again. I grabbed Rangii's hand and continued what I was unable to finish before.

"Moving on, if humans are living while ignoring the natural order, isn't that bad for phantoms like you? Aren't you all basically a part of nature?"

"That isn't the case."

Rangii said this without a doubt.

"We are children of chaos. If providence was broken and distortion increased, this would be a suitable environment for us. If the children were to follow me and no longer keep themselves hidden, this land would become a paradise for us."

Paradise of the phantoms? That's really bad. The person who's going to teach her what love is had better show up fast. Otherwise this place will become a phantom paradise like she said. And the one who was still on the fence about creating a phantom paradise or not said,

".....Why is there so much food on the street?"

Having seen plump chickens, I mean pigeons, walking on the street, Rangii began to drool and her hidden tail pointed towards the sky.....

"Hey, hey!"

I quickly grabbed Rangii's tail and,

"Uu--haa!?"

"Put your tail back, you brat."

She put her tail back inside her clothes. With her hands covering her butt, she was bouncing up and down and shouted at me.

"Can't you touch it a little more gently?!"

"Nevermind that, what would you have done if someone saw you stick your tail out?!"

".....Did I do that?"

Rangii laughed, going *heh heh*, and scratched her head.

"I didn't know."

This time, should I overlook this? Since there's no one around here to have seen it. Instead, I should give her a proper warning.

"Also, you can't eat the things on the street."

"I can't eat them?"

I made myself clear to Rangii who spoke so disappointedly.

"That stuff is dirty. If you eat it then you'll get a stomach ache."

".....I don't like painful things."

I want to know what kind of phantom would get hungry at the sight of pigeons on the street, seriously.

*A-Mart.* It's an overly large market to go to just to buy groceries for dinner, but I was unexpectedly okay with shopping here. The only problem is that there are so many people. But isn't there the saying to hide a tree, hide it in the forest? Actually, because there are so many people moving busily, Rangii should attract less attention than in a place with fewer people.

That is a lie. People are looking this way enough to sting. I decided. I won't take her outside with me again.

I put in a 100 won coin and pulled out a cart.

"Is that something you ride in?"

Rangii shared her personal interpretation. It seems like she came up with that conclusion because kids her age were riding on the carts and their parents were pushing them, but..... Well, she's not wrong. But I don't plan on having Rangii ride on the cart. I mean, she's heavy.

"No. You put your stuff here."

"Is that so?"

Those two amber pupils were asking me, then why are those kids riding on it? It looks like fun but you mean I can't? ..... Could this be the thing where a pet communicates with its owner?

Probably not.

"You can ride in it like that, but only kids do that. Or do you want to ride in it?"

"I, I don't. I am not a child so I won't ride in it."

"Okay, okay."

But I immediately regretted my words.

"This! I want to eat this!"

As soon as Rangii passed the entrance, she grabbed my hand and dragged me to the butcher section. She looked like a tiger that hadn't eaten in three days. I stopped Rangii who was merging with the refrigerator by grabbing her by her waist and moving her back.

"Hey, you dummy. That's premium meat, premium."

"Premium? What's that?"

"It means it's from cows that were raised in this country. It's the same as saying the beef is expensive. And I can't buy anything expensive."

"You don't have enough money?"

The truth is I could buy it. But for housewife-like reasons I can't allow myself to buy it. Because I don't even eat this kind of expensive meat on holidays. .....No, even though I'm not a housewife.

"Then what about that?"

Rangii pointed at a different type of meat. It was shank meat that was meant to be braised.

"So you're okay with anything as long as it's meat."

"I like bear meat the most!"

".....But bear hunting is banned."

"Hm? In the place where I lived, Saehee would sometimes catch a bear and....."

"That's enough."

Is the disappearance of black bears in Jirisan your guys' fault? No, back then when she served bear gall bladder, Saehee said something about revenge for the papa bear.....

I stopped thinking about it. In this world, the saying ignorance is bliss is often true.

I asked the butcher who was watching Rangii with warm eyes for a geun<sup>[2]</sup> of seasoned pork and put it in the cart. If I had time I'd season it myself, but I don't have the time to wait for that to finish. My stomach, that is. Okay then, all that's left is.....

"Sunghoon! What's this? It looks weird!"

With a drink in my hand, I saw Rangii shouting out my name and I thought to myself that shopping this time would be a lot more troublesome.

In the end I decided to put Rangii on the cart. Since I'd rather the cart get a little heavier than for Rangii to end up even more active.

"Whoaaa--!"

"Don't move outside of the cart. Don't kick your feet. Don't shake it. Just stay still, ya brat! Are you a kid?!"

"Ah, so I can't do this?"

What kind of magic could be within Rangii's gaze as she's looking up at me? Seeing Rangii look a little dejected, my anger subsided.

"No, that's not what I meant. If you keep doing that then you could end up in danger. It'd hurt if you fell from there."

"That wouldn't happen."

Having heard Rangii say that so naturally, I felt like teasing her.

"Ah, really?"

I used a bit of my strength and turned the cart to the left!

"Wah--wah--wah!"

Rangii was in a daze and grabbed on tight to the cart to not fall off. Uhahaha! This time to the right!

"U--ah--wah!!"

Now she's wriggling to the other side. Uhahaha. You little brat. Did you say something like this wouldn't happen?

".....Young man."

I was scolded by the old grocery clerk lady.

Having spent 30 minutes buying simple ingredients for dinner, I felt like I was going to collapse right away. Because we were causing enough harm to stop the market's business. Thank goodness the other shoppers would just laugh it off. For whatever reason, Rangii was smiling delightedly.

"Hehehe. That was fun."

"Really."

I couldn't say anything to Rangii who looked so happy.

"Let's go together next time as well. There are so many interesting things."

My inability to say anything was just in the past.

"I can't."

"But why?"

"You see, you....."

You attract too much attention and lack common sense so it tires me out. I was going to say that.

".....Sunghoon?"

Is that an angelic voice I just heard behind me?!

"Oh, Narae?"

Narae was standing there, wearing an innocent-looking dress and with a small bag over her shoulder. Could this be fate? We didn't even talk about meeting up together and we still met so we must be a fated couple..... is what I would think if only she hadn't sent that message.

"When'd you get back?"

"Ah, just now."

"I told you to call me when you got back to Seoul, didn't I."

Narae's glare turned sharp as a knife. Ugh. And I remembered she did tell me that. But the message Narae sent was.....

[Die. Just stay there and die.] Because of that I was so scared that I didn't even think of calling her.

"Because I just came back."

"What's that in your hand?"

"Ingredients for dinner."

"And you just came back?"

Are my brains on Rangii's level?

"No, you see....."

I should apologize. The only answer I can give is to apologize.

"I'm, I'm sorry! I was afraid that you'd be angry so I wasn't able to call. I'm really sorry."

Narae went *humpf* and crossed her arms.

"What about me is scary?"

Right now you look plenty scary.

Are phantoms really the only beings capable of killing someone with just their glare? With my lips feeling dry, I panicked while trying to decide what to do.

If I tell the truth, that I was too busy with Rangii to call, then Narae would probably get truly angry. Because it'd sound like I was just using Rangii as an excuse. And then, help came from an unexpected source.

"Sunghoon, who is this woman?"

Good job. Rangii. So even you can be useful. I tried to changed the subject by introducing them to each other. If only Narae hadn't responded to Rangii, that is.

"I'm Sunghoon's friend, but who're you?"

"I am Sunghoon's fiancée."

My thinking was incorrect. She wasn't useful. Rangii just poured oil onto a burning house. Even though it was the middle of summer, I felt a chill go down my spine. I'm telling the truth. I had forgotten that that was how this brat thought of me. Narae started to tap on the ground, bothered.

"Fiancée? What're you saying? Since when did you have a fianceé?"

This is the first time I've ever heard Narae's voice so ominous.

"Also, there was that little girl on the phone who said something about being naked....."

"Uwaaa! That's not what happened!"

"It's okay. Even if you are to become Sunghoon's concubine, I am generous enough to understand."

Can you not see how I'm trying to defuse the situation right now?

"Con, concubine?! What're you saying? What're you saying?! Have I gone insane?!"

While doing my best to hold in the tears as my 10 years of feelings I kept had been rejected before even confessing,

"Wait!"

I pulled on Rangii's hand, widened the distance between her and Narae, bowed my body, and whispered to Rangii.

"Hey, I'm going to tell her you're my cousin so just go along with it."

Rangii puffed out her cheeks.

"Why do I have to do that? Isn't it true that I'm your fiancée?"

It's also true that the fiancé didn't know he had a fiancée until yesterday.

"If you don't plan on making more trouble for me, please do this. Okay?"

".....Okay. I do not plan on causing distress to the one who will become my husband."

Even though she has a sulky look on her face, she thankfully understood. I grabbed Rangii's hand again and returned in front of Narae.

"Looks like your secret meeting is over."

Uwaa. My feelings were hurt by Narae's thorny remark.

"No, that's not what that was. Please listen to what I have to say, Narae-nim."

"Speak."

With Narae glaring at me, I told the lie I had prepared.

"Rangii's my cousin, but when we were younger she followed me everywhere and she said that. Okay? You know how it goes. It's like when a kid says when I grow up I'm going to marry Dad~."

"I am not a young kid."

You just stay still. Think about for whose sake I have to make excuses like a guy who was just caught two-timing.

"....."

Narae narrowed her eyes. If they were expressed by emoticons, her eyes would be two consecutive lines. When I joke about it with my friends, I call it her death glare. Narae's really scary when she looks like that. What else can I do to survive?

"Okay."

Huh?

"If that's what you're saying then it's probably true. Because you tell the truth whenever you can."

It looks like the angelic Narae is just going to accept my last-minute excuses. Miss Narae, a true angel.

"So because you're lying to me, I can't just overlook this. I want to go to your house and listen to what you have to say in detail; that's okay, right?"

When did she become a fallen angel?

"Um, that's a bit troublesome. Everything's a mess and I don't have anything to treat guests....."

**"That's. Okay. Right?"**

With Narae staring daggers at me, I couldn't do anything but obey Narae-nim.

".....Yes."

Although I was scared when I left, after we ended up becoming a group of three and returned home, I naturally sighed at this situation.

"She seems to be too strong-willed to become a concubine; couldn't you

reconsider?"

And at Rangii's small voice, I returned to reality. I again thought to myself where I could find your true partner. Maybe in an elementary school.

And I forgot that there was one more thing I had to think about.

".....And who's that woman?"

That's right. Saehee was at home. Even if you take into account her personality, on the outside she looks just like someone our age!

After the angry and lovely Narae opened the door, Saehee who was previously just watching TV came to greet us. And Saehee helped by directing us to sit around a table.

The situation right now is sitting in this order to my right are Narae, Saehee, and Rangii. Even in this situation, I was a little happy to have Narae sitting next to me in my house after so long. She hasn't come here since we entered middle school.

"Ow ow ow!!"

Narae pinched my side. Could she have read my mind?

"Shouldn't you answer my question now?"

Why can't I say that I'm relieved that that wasn't the case?

"Ah, yeah. But it might take a while to explain."

Narae slightly bit her lower lip. It's like a little habit that she does when she gets angry. That means she's extremely angry.

"I don't care."

Seeing Narae's determined face, I thought as hard as I could about how to explain. Giving a lie as close to the truth as possible would be best.

Yeah. Everything should work out if I tell her that Rangii is my cousin who lived in grandpa's estate, that Saehee is her bodyguard and helper, and some stuff happened so Rangii came to Seoul with me.

After coming up with all this within one second, I wondered if I was a master trickster.

"Saehee is....."

"I am Master's maid."

Seeing as how Saehee just organized all my thoughts in a few words, I had to wonder if Saehee was a god.

"Ow ow ow ow!"

The finger pinching my side has just gotten stronger?

"Master?"

Ah, she's responding to that unusual word.

"Pardon me, but who's the master?"

"It seems you have misunderstood. My master is Rangii-nim. And there is no need for you to be polite to me."

"But this is the first time we've met each other."

Although she gets easily misunderstood because of her fierce appearance and

word choice, she is unexpectedly very polite. To the point where even if they look alike in age, she has to use honorifics the first time they meet.

"There is no need."

"No, but....."

"There is no need."

Ah, there it is. Saehee's using her expressionless face to force Narae to agree with her. The truth is when I was struck by that, an unknown force made me lose what I had to say, and even sitting beside Narae, I could see that that force wasn't disappearing.

".....Okay."

Narae nodded with a bitter look on her face. I wondered if I could finally relax a little after what just happened, but Narae was a very strong-willed kid.

"But when are you going to explain to me why they are in your house, Sunghoon? You weren't planning on avoiding the topic, right?"

I did plan that. I'm caught. Although I didn't complete the excuse in my head, I was going to try to tell her even a bad one when Saehee spoke.

"At the behest of Master's guardian father, who had to go on an overseas business trip, we are staying with young master Sunghoon, the one who Rangii got along so well with."

My mouth dropped open. I never imagined Saehee would so skillfully explain this for me.

"But something about that doesn't sound right?"

"That is how it is."

Narae and Saehee's eyes clashed in midair. Dang, I really don't want to get near this.

Narae sighed.

"Okay. This seems like a family problem so I won't pry. I was sorry, Sunghoon."

Narae released her hand from my side. Now it feels like I'll survive. I didn't say this before, but my side was hurting all this time. Out of Narae's sight, I secretly gave a thumbs up to Saehee for a job well done when,

"And Master is the young master's fiancee."

It seems like I'll have to reverse the direction of my finger.

And with Narae pinching my side,

"That's the truth. Sunghoon is the man that will become my husband."

So Rangii set the fire,

"Due to the oath sworn by her deceased father, Master and the young master have been engaged since before they were born."

And Saehee fanned the fire.

Isn't there anyone who's going to save me from within this chaos?

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**Notes:**

1. The Asian idea of cleaning your body: scrubbing your skin with an abrasive towel.

↖

2. Also known as "catty": <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catty>

↖

# Part 1

It's the eye of the tiger. It's the thrill of the fight, rising up to the challenge of our (love) rival.

*Translator: Dijon*

*Editor: Narane*

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## 03. Third Story

Even though I can't even remember how many times I've drunk the barley tea Saehee brought, for some reason my lips were totally dry. Ah, it's like sitting on a pincushion. Narae's glaring at me from the corner of her eye so hard, it hurts.

".....So you mean, even though Sunghoon and Rangii have a cousin-like relationship, they're actually complete strangers? And they're even engaged?"

It looks like our story has ended up like that.

"Y, yeah."

"That's right. We're lovey-dovey."

When and where did you learn that word?

*Sting.* Narae's glare hurts a whole lot more.

"Really?"

It's better that I tell her about the engagement than about Rangii being a phantom.

"It's like that for now, but....."

"Lolicon. Go die."

Words that I couldn't ignore came from Narae's mouth.

"Who, who's a lolicon? My tastes are normal!"

I must look just like someone from a soap opera who got caught cheating by his lover.

"That's right. Of course Sunghoon likes a perfectly normal woman like I."

You brat. Would you shut that mouth for now? Are you planning on robbing me of my romance and going all the way to bankrupt me?

"....."

Ahhh, Miss Narae's scornful glare hurts. My heart hurts.

"Even if we are engaged, our parents are the ones who decided that; and I didn't even know about it until yesterday."

"But despite that, it looks like you two are really close?"

"Sunghoon met me once when he was young."

"When?"

"When Sunghoon was born....."

I swiftly blocked Rangii's mouth.

"Uub?"

Don't look at me like you're asking why I'm doing this. You brat, try and use common sense. I'm clearly older than you, so does it make sense that I met you the moment I was born?

"Ha, haha. When Rangii was born, not that long ago. Yeah. I was also young then, so I forgot."

I carefully removed the hand that was blocking Rangii's mouth. I was trying to tell her, *hey, don't say anything weird*, with my eyes, but Rangii didn't have a lot of experience in understanding someone's thoughts.

"Why do you keep acting like that? Even though I said that I would accept a concubine, at some point a concubine should know her place! Isn't it natural for you to show love to your wife, to me, first?"

The first thing I'm going to do is shut that mouth.

"Who're you calling a concubine?"

Look. Because of you, Narae got mad.

"If Sunghoon were to pick who to be his wife between the two of us, he would obviously choose me!"

You're getting mad about something weird!

"Why are you saying that?! Sunghoon will obviously choose me! Sunghoon is totally in love with me! Because he's a lolicon!"

Are you planning on killing me?

At first Narae got angry at Rangii's nonsensical words, but suddenly she gave a bright smile, looking like a flower, and said,

"Rangii, dear."

Narae, in a voice as if trying to placate a child, spoke of a cruel reality that I could never vocalize.

"I know Sunghoon's tastes quite well, okay? Ever since he was young, he liked big-breasted ladies."

That was a cruel reality to me as well.

How, how do you know about my tastes?!

"But there's no way....."

"So you see, **there's no way he would choose you.**"

At that moment.

"There's no way that's true!"

Rangii stood up and shouted while emitting an intense energy.

"There's no way, no way that that's true! Sunghoon, Sunghoon is the one who will love me!!"

Something overbearing filled the room, almost suffocating me. Is, is this the so-called Reiatsu?!

"Sunghoon, *sniffle*, likes me!!"

You brat, what you doing all of a sudden?

I looked up at Rangii while thinking, *you brat, what are you doing all of a*

sudden? when,

"....."

I wanted to faint.

".....A tail? And ears? From where?"

Narae's words are reaffirming that the situation before my eyes is reality. That's right. While angry and on the verge of tears, Rangii forgot to hide her tail and ears.

Oh crap. What do I do? Could I just say it's a magic trick? Could I trick her by saying, *surprise, it was a surprise show~* and have this all blow over?

Of course not!

"Please excuse me for a moment."

Saehee, the only one of us to have kept their cool, made her move. She put her hand on Narae who was confused at the sight of Rangii's sudden tail and ears. At that moment, Narae collapsed backwards.

"Wha, what?"

"More importantly, the young master should seek to calm down Master. Right away."

In times like this, Saehee's expressionless face makes her a lot more trustworthy. I decided to go to Rangii, who was getting ready to scream, with her hands in fists, tears forming around her eyes, and breathing hard, going *huuk-huuk*.

"Hey, hey. What's the problem, huh?"

"That woman, she--! *Uu*, that woman said that you hate, *huk*, hate me....."

With Rangii stuck to my chest, I rubbed her head and spoke.

"Who, when, and where did anyone say that?"

"But, but. Didn't that woman say so?! That there's no way, *kuu*, no way you would love me!"

Well, if a man with typical sexual preferences were to pick between Narae and you, he would obviously choose Narae. And I'm definitely a typical man, so I'd pick Narae.

But, Rangii,

"Hey, just because you're like that, it doesn't mean I can't love....."

It's embarrassing, so I can't say it.

"I mean, liking someone is different. No matter your age, face, or personality, none of that stuff matters."

"But....."

I blocked Rangii from continuing.

"Listen well. None of that stuff matters when it comes to liking someone."

That is a lie. Appearance, money, breasts, height, personality, and a lot more are related to that.

"You have your own charm. So I....."

Rangii's a kid. A kid. A little kid. A freaking little kid. So why is blood rushing to my

face?

"Like you, Rangii."

Rangii stopped crying. She loosened her fists, and her previously unfocused eyes looked up at me. Hey, look somewhere else. If you look at me with such innocent eyes, then my conscience will get hurt. I said something so embarrassing that I wanted to hide in a mouse hole, so stop looking at me like that!

Rangii lifted her hand and held them tightly onto my chest.

"Really? Really?"

Rangii's two cheeks were getting rosy. To such Rangii, I said,

"Nope. I lied."

She reacted like when you tease a kid about whether or not you'll give her candy, but then you put it in your own mouth. She started tearing up again, her eyebrows looking like the Chinese Eight (八), and her mouth looked like the Korean letter (^.^).

"Uu, uuu--, uuuu--."

If I keep this up, she may really cry, so I should stop teasing her. I bent down, hugged Rangii with both my arms, lifted her up, and continued,

"Because I like you a super-duper lot."

I'm telling Rangii what she wants to hear. Ah, shit. There are goosebumps on my arms. But seeing a blooming flower on Rangii's face, I thought, *so what if I have goosebumps?* Because kids look their best when they're smiling.

"Uu--. How mean! Sunghoon is mean!"

Rangii slapped down against my shoulders with her hands. Of course, it hurts. Even if it's a little kid, something that hurts will hurt. But I won't show it on my face. Because that's being an adult.

Okay, I've calmed down Rangii, so should I worry about the next thing? Now that Rangii was back to normal-- I mean, in a better mood than normal, I tried to put her down, but somehow she climbed and clung onto my back, so I gave up. I shifted my position to have her on my back comfortably.

"Saehee."

"What do you need of me, you crimi-- I mean, young master?"

"What were you about to call me?"

"I haven't a clue what you are talking about. But it seems as though there is something else you should be curious about."

Seeing as how Saehee skillfully changed the subject, it looks like I'll have to have a private chat with her later.

"So what're you going to do?"

Even if it was for just a moment, before she was knocked unconscious by Saehee, Narae saw Rangii's tail and ears. If I don't prepare some kind of answer while she's unconscious, then it'll be terrible.

"The simplest solution would be to drop her in the ocean in a metal drum with cement, but....."

Saehee was glancing at me from the side while I had a furious expression on my face.

"The victim isn't the young master, so I do not plan on doing that."

So if it were me, you'd do it?

"That is why I was going to perform a simple memory manipulation on her, but a problem has occurred."

".....What is it?"

"The one called Narae is a member of the Bear Clan. I believed that she was a normal human, but I was fooled. I never expected that I would be unable to notice those who had not had their powers awoken."

What? Bear Clan?! And a barrier?

And on that topic,

"What's the Bear Clan, and what do you mean by barrier?"

Saehee looked at me pityingly. Please don't show emotion only in times like this.

"All day today, I worked to create a barrier to be able to detect the energy of different phantoms as well as ourselves in the Seoul area."

Is it okay to think of it as a convenient radar?

"While drinking alcohol?"

A barrier-under-influence?

"Do you have any complaints?"

I do not.

"Then explain to me in layman's terms what the Bear Clan is."

"It is the enemy."

".....A little longer, please."

"The Bear Clan I am speaking of is composed of Ungnyeo and her direct descendants."

"And by Ungnyeo, you mean the one from the Dangun Myth, that Ungnyeo?"

"Is there a different Ungnyeo?"

I'm sorry for asking something so obvious.

"If members of the Bear Clan inherit Ungnyeo's blood, and should they meet a certain condition, they become female puppets of Ungnyeo. Then only their heads remain under their own control."

"Explain so it's easier to understand."

"They are the bitches among bitches."

I should stop talking.

"Simply put, they're like this: that fat hag hates the fact that Hwanung paid attention to me, so she's using her descendants to try and kill me."

"Then, aren't you in danger?"

With Rangii on my back, in a position that didn't inspire any confidence at all, she put her mouth to my ear.....,

"Don't worry. No matter how many dozens, or hundreds of them come, I will

protect you."

She whispered this with complete confidence. Hey, you brat. The one I'm worried about is you. Why are you worrying about me? I'm a normal human so there's no reason for the Bear Clan to target me.

Well--, Rangii telling me that she was strong enough to protect me must've been just to make me feel safer. I decided to think of it as that. But maybe Saehee saw that I wasn't convinced at all because she gave an additional explanation.

"Approximately 300 years ago as well, we repelled an attack by the foolish Bear Clan more easily than we could flip our palms. Because the seal has weakened since then, they will be unable to harass us thoughtlessly."

Could Rangii's strangely anachronistic thoughts and speech-style be an influence from that time?

No, that's not the important thing here. I should go back to the main issue.

"So what's the problem with Narae being a part of the Bear Clan?"

"Every member of the Bear Clan has some degree of resistance to magic. Although she has yet to meet the condition, hastily casting magic may result in a small problem."

"What is it?"

"If she is fortunate, brain damage; if not, instant death."

"Oi."

What the heck is that a huge problem to you, then? Anyway, if I interpret her words differently,

"Are you saying that, since you can't manipulate her memory, you need to find a different solution?"

"That is correct, young master."

What should I do? I need the wisdom of Solomon himself. .....Not the one where he tries cutting a baby in half!

"Instead, if she realized her power, this problem would become much easier."

Saehee's words caught my attention.

"Then, wouldn't everything work out if she met that condition? What is it?"

"It is her breast size."

I was dumbfounded at Saehee's indifferent, completely serious words.

".....What?"

"Members of the Bear Clan awaken their strength when they become greater than a D cup."

I decided that Saehee was screwing with me and spouting nonsense. I turned my head and I asked Rangii, who now had her chin on my shoulder.

"Really?"

"I don't know what a D cup is, but all of my opponents had large breasts."

Okay, but why are you talking while tightening around my neck?

"I made sure to educate the attackers, with those huge, useless things swaying and shaking, exactly who they were dealing with."

From the feeling Rangii's tiny breasts on my back, I, for whatever reason, felt pity for her.

"So what do we do? Can I tell her the truth about you two?"

"Please do as you please, young master."

".....Is it really okay if I do that?"

Although I meant if it was okay if I told her about phantoms,

"She is the one to become the concubine of the man to be my husband. It would be right to do so."

Seeing the two phantoms before me not at all worried about that, I felt like the weird one. So I decided.

"So you're saying, after I fainted in your house, I was unconscious for nearly an hour, and I just now woke up?"

"Yes, that's right. Miss Narae."

Please be fooled. I'm begging you. Por favor.

".....Do you wanna die?"

"It was impossible?!"

Ignoring Saehee's look of pity and Rangii's look of disappointment, I moved onto my next plan. Although I call it a plan, it's not well-made, and the plain truth is that I'm adapting it on the fly. I simply explained that Rangii is the tiger from the Dangun myth, that she lived in my grandfather's estate away from humans, that he passed away (even though he's not dead), and that there was no one else who could take care of her so I brought her to Seoul. Although I hid all the other important facts except for those, Narae must have been shocked speechless after learning that Rangii and Saehee are phantoms, because after I was done explaining, she didn't say a word.

After I finished my explanation and drank a glass of barley tea, Narae held my hand and looked at me with eyes full of sadness. Huh? Why're you doing that all of a sudden?

"You must've had a really tough time, Sunghoon."

Ah, is that how you're going to be?

"You must've been really shocked because of your grandfather's passing. Yeah. That's why I'll understand."

Your pitying kindness is making me sadder. It seems like Narae is treating me like someone who lost it after I heard my grandfather passed away, but at least she understands, that's all crap.

"No, that's all real."

"You expect me to believe that? The tail and ears that kid has on must be because you forced her to wear them because of your perverted interests, you pervert, sexual harasser, dirty old man!"

Oi, oi. Even though I had a lot of things to say at Narae's incomprehensible yelling, Rangii got angry and spoke up first.

"No it's not! These are truly a part of my body!"

She clenched her fists, closed her eyes hard, proudly moving her ears and tail, and while Narae was trying to calm down Rangii, Narae sighed.

Narae opened her mouth, looking completely calm and making it seem unbelievable that she was furious just a bit ago.

"I know, Rangii. It's just that I couldn't think objectively if I didn't talk like this. For him to talk about phantoms in this century. And that he's the guardian of you phantoms, of course I have to be able to believe that. It's because he's speaking nonsense to try and trick me."

"Sorry."

I bowed my head. Although I'm going through all this because of my damn grandfather and my eccentric dad, in other words my family, Narae was totally unrelated. But now, because of me, she's caught up in this too. Really, there's nothing I can say.

It's okay. *Because I'd be even more upset if I didn't know.*"

Narae actually comforted me. I heard everything up to the *it's okay*, but what did you say after that?

As I was about to ask her what it was she said, Narae suddenly pinched my side.

"Uwauwaagh!"

"But what? I was passed out for an hour? Do you think I'm an idiot? Did you think I'd fall for that?"

You're pinching the same place as before! Why're you pinching somewhere you already pinched before?!"

"N, no! That's not it!!"

Would I ever say such things under normal circumstances?

"And, if I was fooled, you were going to keep hiding this, weren't you?"

"That goes without saying."

Narae stared daggers at me. She doubled her strength.

"Ugyaaaagh!"

"If you're going to try and trick me, then make up something convincing, you idiot! Who would fall for such a pathetic lie?!"

"Ow! It hurts! Please let me go, Narae-nim!!"

And so Narae let go of my side. Although I was rubbing hard with my hand, the pain wasn't going away at all. While I was moving my butt to get away from Narae for the sake of my sides,

"So now that everything's revealed, what are you going to do?"

Narae asked me.

"Huh?"

What am I going to do?

"Rangii and Saehee..... may be phantoms, but right, now they're still girls."

Even though Rangii looks like a girl, she's actually nearly an animal, and Saehee is almost an unidentified mystery creature, but so what. Like Narae said, right now they really are girls.

"Even if your dad is living with you, you can't just live with two girls! Wait, it's not because you're okay with whatever as long as they're girls, right?"

"That's not it....."

"If that's not it, then what?"

I don't know what to say. It seems like Sahee has connections in the government, but even if she found a different house, Rangii probably wouldn't leave my house. While I was worrying about how to answer, I never imagined Saehee would respond to what Narae said.

"That is truly not the case. The young master's parents are not residing here."

"Eh?"

Narae was dumbstruck.

"What?!"

No, she was angry.

"The heck does that mean?! Hey! Are you trying to use this opportunity while your parents are gone?!"

Seeing the spiritual body of Shiva as if about to destroy all of creation with a single blow, I lost any words I was about to say. Narae, you don't think I brought these two here while my parents were gone to do wicked things to them, right? No, after seeing your face is that actually correct? That is a misunderstanding. It is a misunderstanding.

"No, you see, madam, it was only after I brought these two to Seoul with me that my parents had something come up and had to leave."

Why am I using honorifics to Narae right now?

Narae leaned down, slammed her hands on the table, and then spoke,

"Are you telling me to believe that ridiculous excuse?!"

"But it's true."

"Do you have any proof?"

"I do not."

With her eyes looking even more furious than before, Narae lowered her hand to my inner thigh..... and pinched it.

"Uwohoohk?!"

"You idiot! What the hell was that yesterday, really?!"

Why are you bringing up something from yesterday it has nothing to do with this and how

For the sake of my survival I grabbed Narae's wrist. Her other hand went directly for my side. I quickly moved my body. Is this what's called a reflex?!

"Oh, you're dodging?"

I quietly put down my hand and turned away. Narae pinched my side. Maybe I've grown numb there because I can't feel any pain.

"So you're all going to stay like this until your parents come back?"

".....I mean, but I can't drive them away."

Narae fell deep into thought at my realistic objection when,

"Then Rangii and Saehee can stay at my house."

She said something difficult to understand.

"Eh?"

"Two girls can't stay in a house with a guy! What if you did something terrible?!"

Then I'd die.

Rangii is a tiger the size of a mountain and Saehee is some kind of unidentifiable phantom. If I went *uhuhu*, *I can't hold it in anymore!* *Uwaaang~* and pounced at them, I'd just end up receiving terrible punishment.

But setting all that aside, Narae's idea has its appeal. Narae's family is rich and entrusting them to Narae might be okay.

However,

"I can't do that."

"Why? No way, do you....."

I cut off Narae, stopping her from continuing a ridiculous misunderstanding.

"No, that's not what I meant. How could I do that after they trusted and followed me all the way here? I have to take responsibility for them, but I'll accept your feelings."

Narae got furious.

"E, even if you say that you don't look cool at all!"

That's because I didn't say it to look cool.

Narae looked as though, if she was in a manhwa, she'd have veins popping out of her forehead as she was bearing a lot of thoughts in her head. She's a member of the Bear Clan, so she's bearing a lot of thoughts, you see..... Sorry. I messed up. I wanted to escape reality, even if I had to use a bad joke. But it was only after Narae spoke that I really wanted to escape reality.

"Then, until your parents come back, I'm going to stay here, too."

"Eh?"

What are you saying right now? She may have gotten caught up in the moment and not really thought about what she's saying.

"No, Narae. That's....."

"I used to come to play and sleep over with you all the time a long time ago!"

That was back in elementary school!

"What kind of demand is that?!"

"Shut up! If I want to do it, I will! I'm going to sleep in your house too! Or are you saying that it's okay for them, but not for me? If not, what else? Does it make you uncomfortable for me to be here?!"

If you say that much, then there's no way I can respond.

When Narae is so completely stubborn, at first there's no way she'd accept a direct refusal. She's too strong an opponent. But that's only a direct refusal. It's possible to refuse later on. I mean like this:

"Okay."

While acting like I accepted,

"But. You need to get permission from your parents first."

I just gave a completely impossible condition. If they're proper parents, there's no way they'll let their fully grown daughter stay at a man's house for several days, even if he's a childhood friend. It's a bit of a shame, but if Narae stays here then I'll lose my mind.

But I got nervous after seeing Narae so full of confidence for some reason.

"For real?"

I stuttered at her sudden energy.

"Y, yeah."

Narae took out her cell phone and probably called her parents. Narae opened her mouth, but I didn't know if the one who answered was her mom or her dad.

"Yes, Dad. It's me. Yes. I have something to tell you. I'm going to sleep at Sunghoon's house for a few days. No. His parents aren't here."

Oi, Narae. Didn't you just nonchalantly step on a landmine?

"You mean I can't?"

Thankfully Narae's dad seems like someone with a good head on his shoulders. Narae furrowed her brow a bit, then a moment later. A rare sight appeared as Narae smiled brightly and spoke with a soft voice.

"Okay. Fine. Then I won't ever get married and live with **Papa** forever. **Forever**. That's okay, right, **Papa**?"

Why am I getting goosebumps on my back from hearing this?

"Yes. Okay. Thank you, Dad. Ah, I'll give the phone to Sunghoon for a bit."

Narae took her cell phone away from her ear and handed it to me. Though I felt uneasy, I took it and opened my mouth.

"Hello."

[Please take good care of my daughter, Sunghoon. Make the most of this opportunity. Please, please do that. That little devil is.....]

As I was about to hear something like a scream, Narae took the phone and hung up. Um, I'm curious about that last part about a little devil.

"Everything's worked out, right?"

But for some reason, I feel like I cracked open Pandora's box?

"Although members of the Bear Clan have a strong obsession for their mate, they have trouble expressing their true feelings."

Saehee, when did you get next to me? Since a moment ago you were in front of me. And it feels like you just said something weird?

"I shall prepare a meal for Master. I came to ask if it was okay to prepare food."

"I'm hungry~. Let's talk after we eat dinner~."

Hearing Rangii's whining, I realized I was hungry as well. Come to think of it, I went out grocery shopping to get ingredients for dinner. I can even, I mean can't understand why Rangii started drooling over pigeon.

"Yeah."

"Then I shall prepare dinner."

"I bought the ingredients before so thanks."

"I shall do so."

With a slight smile on her face, Saehee spoke to Narae.

"Do you not think that this conversation is similar to one between newlyweds?"

Oi, what're you saying right now?

".....You said that so I could hear it, didn't you?"

Narae isn't one to walk away from a fight.

"How rude. Seeing such egotism, I could not help but do so as well."

In times like these, just say no. Narae even narrowed her eyes!

"Great. I want to help too; it's okay if I do, right?"

"Thank you very much."

Seen from the outside, with Narae smiling and Saehee expressionless, the two looked like they got along as they walked to the kitchen. I should avoid the kitchen. Definitely.

Okay then, it looks like a typhoon just passed by so I can finally take a breather. I want to lie down on the floor with my legs and arms stretched out like Rangii, but I have human dignity. But you brat. What're you doing right now? Apart from laying down like you don't care about a thing, why're you banging on the

floor?

".....What're you doing?"

"Sunghoon still wouldn't play with me, so I'm angry."

It seems that when tigers are upset these days, they lie with their limbs outstretched while hitting the floor with their palm. Even if I entered a tiger's den by an accident, I could survive by making the tiger angry. But still, if you interpreted what happened between Narae and me as playing, then I'd have to fit you a pair of glasses right away.

"I was busy because of you. If you hadn't shown your tail and ears, then all this wouldn't have gotten so complicated."

Rangii puffed out her cheeks.

"Uuu--. But I couldn't help that. How could I have ignored such words?"

I probably would've just ignored them. Because there are lots of times when you aren't chosen by someone you like. Will such a thing happen to the future-me as well?

.....Ah. I should wipe away my tears. For the sake of my potentially lamentable future, I decided to be on Rangii's side.

"Yeah, yeah. You didn't do anything wrong."

Rangii laughed, going *hee hee* at my answer, and she crawled under the table as she pushed her legs out the other side towards me. You brat. Are you saying that it's tiring to get up? Rangii moved further, and this time, she crawled out all the way to her hips, but hey. A girl should be dressed neatly. Your *dopo*<sup>[1]</sup> like shirt is moved up, so your belly is visible. Seeing her belly wriggling left then right, slowly exposing itself to get closer to me, I couldn't help but play a prank. I poked Rangii

on the belly button with my finger.

"U--nyak?!"

Rangii suddenly lifted up her limbs, got up, then made a bang as she shook the table. What a fun kid. Teasing her was worth it. Having gotten up on the opposite side of the table from me, Rangii whined while rubbing her red forehead.

"Why'd you suddenly do that? Weren't you surprised?"

"Took the words right out of my mouth. What're you doing?"

"I tried to sit on your lap."

"Then you should've gotten up properly and sat there."

"It's annoying to get up."

If annoyances were given ratings, you'd be a first-class tiger.

"Ah, is that so."

I took a slight step back, saw Rangii's legs poking out from under the table, grabbed them, and,

"Huh? Why're you doing that?"

I pulled her towards me.

"Ha--eek?!"

While squealing, she looked at me with her eyes wide open, and her face came up from under the table.

"If you don't want this to happen to you, then next time, sit properly."

"That, that was fun! Can't you do it again?"

Looks like it backfired.

""Lolicon."""

When did you two come out?!

The dinner Narae and Saehee made was so delicious as to elicit a scream. Seeing the unbelievable food made from the simple ingredients I bought, my mouth was watering.

We ate dinner with Rangii and Narae sitting next to me around a circular table, and Saehee opposite to me. Mmm~. It tastes good.

"How's the spinach dish? I'm the one who made it."

At Narae's carefully asked question, I ate a bite of the spinach and gave her a thumbs up.

"Yeah. It's good."

"Thank goodness. I was worried you wouldn't like it."

"I'm serious, it's really good."

More than anything, it's a side dish that Narae made for me. Thus I could already comprehend a heavenly taste.

"Young master. Please try the pumpkin-jeon as well."

At Saehee's suggestion I tried a bite of the pumpkin-jeon. It's really good. Although I already knew this, Saehee is really good at cooking. "It's delicious."

"That is a relief."

.....For some reason, the mood feels really tense, but is that just my imagination? No, it doesn't seem like my imagination. Narae-nim seems, for whatever reason, to be in quite a bad mood.

"Sunghoon."

For some reason, I have a bad feeling.

"This and this. These are the ones I cooked, so **enjoy** it."

"Besides those, I made the rest. Please **enjoy** it."

Looking closely, I could see that Narae's food was on the left, Saehee's food was on the right, with the Bulgogi in the center.

Oi, you two. What the heck happened in the kitchen while Rangii and I were playing around? It's hard to eat only with one pair of chopsticks when Saehee and Narae are looking at me.

Oh, Miss Saehee, why do you look so anxious to get rid of Narae? In times like these, I feel jealous of Rangii who's eating totally carefree.

.....Seeing her continue to drop food, I was actually no longer jealous of her, considering how clumsy she was with her chopsticks. Just this morning, although she was a little clumsy, she was using them properly. But why are you now **suddenly** like this?

Whenever Rangii dropped the side dishes, she'd go, *uuu*, puff out her cheeks, and glance at me. Are you asking for my help?

Yeah. I feel a little bad for Rangii so I'll help her.

"Rangii."

"What's wrong?"

Her response was a little funny since it sounded like she was sulking.

"Come over here."

I patted my knee. It felt like I was calling for a dog, but it was different. Because she's not Baduk.

"Yeah!"

Rangii took her rice bowl and utensils and sat on my lap.

"I already taught you how to hold your chopsticks. Try and eat properly."

"Hehehe."

I fixed Rangii's clumsy hold on the chopsticks by fiddling with her hand.

"I'm trying."

"Okay, okay. So what do you want to eat?"

"Bulgogi."

I picked up Bulgogi with my chopsticks and put them on top of Rangii's rice.....

"Wait, wait, wait!!"

Hm? Narae suddenly got upset.

"What're you doing right now?!"

With Narae pointing her finger at me, I answered by explaining my actions matter-of-factly.

"But I'm helping Rangii with her food? She may look like an elementary schooler, but she's actually a phantom, so she's clumsy with this stuff."

"It's still weird! Even if that's the case, why is she on your lap?!"

Is this weird? But when I was little, I would sit on top of my mom's knees to teach me how to use my eating utensils.

"This is how we teach this in my family."

"I..... no, that's ridiculous!"

Seeing Narae go bright red and getting upset, should I give her an excuse or maybe protest?

"Because this way, I can make sure that she eats easily and that she isn't being picky with her food. And Rangii's a little kid, so what's the big deal?"

"In what way is she a little kid?!"

Hm? I looked down at Rangii. Rangii looked up at me with bright, innocent eyes.

She's clearly a little kid.

".....Aren't you overreacting?"

"I'm not! Look! She even stuck her tongue at me just now!"

I looked down at her again.

"The meat is tasty~."

"....."

Seeing Rangii enjoy the Bulgogi, I silently hit her lightly on the head.

"Uwah! Why'd you do that all of a sudden?!"

"There's no reason for Narae to lie."

"Do you not trust me?"

"I saw you stick your tongue out."

Rangii was shocked and looked totally surprised.

"You, you saw? How?"

.....Oh man.

"Did you really?"

I was just testing her but she got caught.

"Shoot!"

I spoke to Narae while putting my chin on top of Rangii's head as she was embarrassed.

"As you can see, she's just a kid. Don't pay any attention to stuff like that."

".....You're right."

Dinner was tasty, but after some time of eating uncomfortably the doorbell rang. While I was wondering who it could be, Narae spoke.

"It's a priority delivery. It's probably my luggage, so I'll go."

Narae went out and came back inside with two large bags in hand.

"Were you really planning on sleeping over?"

"I said that I would. Why, did you think I lied?"

I would like it if this entire situation was a lie. If-- just if-- Narae had asked to sleep over when I was all alone at home, I'd welcome her with open arms, but Rangii and Saehee are here. Rangii truly thinks that Narae is beneath her, so there's no real problem there, but the problem is Narae and Saehee. Narae bears some strange hostility against Rangii and Saehee, and I get the feeling that Saehee doesn't like Narae. Could that be because of Narae being part of the Bear Clan? Can they really not get along?

"Which room can I use? I'm also okay with your room. Of course, you'd need to sleep somewhere else."

Hahaha, Miss Narae, you are truly good at joking. Though it looks like you're serious. But which room should I have Narae use? If Narae shared a room with Rangii I feel like something terrible would happen, so the only room left is Dad's..... It bothers me to have her stay in Dad's room, but I clean it every day, so it should be okay. I pointed to Dad's room and spoke.

"Do you want to use my dad's room for now? I'll get you different blankets."

Thank goodness I sometimes have to take care of people Mom knows so I always keep spare blankets for guests. Since that means I don't have to give Narae the blankets that my dad used.

"You're paying attention to unexpected things."

"What do you mean unexpected?"

I'm always paying attention to you. Though I probably won't tell you that. Narae cluelessly went *hmpf* and entered Dad's room.

"I'm going to go unpack and change now."

"Okay."

As she went in, she looked through the gap next to the door and stared at me with scary eyes.

"If you peek, I'll kill you."

".....I won't."

"I'm not going to lock the door."

"Are you telling me to look or not?"

"I'm saying look, and you'll die."

She jokingly stuck her tongue out at me.

Since I don't want to die at the young age of seventeen, I went into my room. Rangii was lounging on the sofa in the living room, and Saehee was next to her, so now is the best time. .....It's not to do anything weird, just that now seems like the best time to find out more about Rangii. I turned on my computer and

searched *tiger* in a search engine. I found folktales, characteristics, and more about tigers. All kinds of information appeared.

Although I was forced to take care of Rangii to maintain humanity's peace, my family's safety, and my own life, that doesn't change the fact that I'm Rangii's guardian. In that case, I need to take responsibility for looking after her. So it isn't weird for me to search for more information about Rangii.

No, seriously. I'm only looking for how to deal with her. It's nothing weird.

It was then,

"Have you evolved from a lolicon to a stalker?"

"Uhyaak!"

Holy crap! Calming down my racing heart, I turned around and saw Saehee looking down at me with an expression contrasting my own-- blankness.

"Would you stop suddenly appearing behind me and talking? I'll die of a heart attack!"

"Next time, I shall be careful."

"But I remember you saying that before, as well."

"Is that so? If you want to know about Master, rather than use the Internet, you can ask me directly."

Are you telling me to do something so shameful?

"I don't want to tell you what I'm bothered about."

"Are you the infamous tsundere?"

"Do you think I'm Jeom Soon-Yi?"[\[2\]](#)

Why is she joking around with me?

"More importantly, why? Don't you have something to say to me?"

"You truly pay attention at the most unexpected times."

What kind of image do those two have of me?

"The truth is that I came here to tell you something."

"What is it?"

"Although Narae-nim has not yet awoken her powers, she is still a member of the Bear Clan. Master also knows this."

"So?"

"Narae-nim being around you would be a bad influence on Master."

"Why?"

Saehee narrowed her eyes.

"The thing above your neck is not only used to eat."

"Isn't it tiring to say things in such a roundabout way?"

"It is easy when you are used to it."

I also want to get used to it. So I can take you down.

Anyway, I should think about it for a second.

Narae is a member of the Bear Clan, and Rangii is a tiger. In the Dangun myth, a tiger and a bear met Hwanung to turn into humans. Hwanung offered the trial lasting 100 days to survive on mugwort and garlic, but the tiger couldn't endure the test, so it ran away. The bear turned into a human, wanted a child, and was chosen by Hwanung to marry him.

So what the heck's the problem? It's probably not because she has a special complex, since she looks like a child while Narae has such a great figure. She's 5,000 years too young to feel something like that.

"It seems you are entertaining foolish thoughts."

"Did you learn how to read minds or something?"

Though I can't deny that my thoughts were foolish.

"What the hell is it?"

"Although I cannot explain in detail, this is related to Master's trauma."

If you were about to start explaining in detail, I'd have to plant an apple tree. [3] But, a trauma? There's no way that Rangii would have such a thing! But I don't think Saehee would lie about something related to Rangii.

"So what do you want me to do?"

"Please chase Narae-nim out."

"Oi, oi."

What the heck kind of nonsense is that?

"Hey. She's staying over here for a few days because she cares for you two; isn't that a little harsh?"

"Truly an idiotic response, so befitting the young master."

Why do I have to hear you calling me an idiot? So what if Narae stays here?

"Young master. There is something you must not forget. That Master came to Seoul with her eyes only on you."

".....I know."

Whatever the reason, I was the one who reached my hand to Rangii, and she's the one who grabbed my hand. That's why I need to take responsibility for Rangii's well-being.

"No. The young master is completely clueless. That is why you invited Narae-nim while completely disregarding Master."

At her words, I started getting furious. What's so wrong about inviting Narae, and what did I do wrong to Rangii for me to hear those words? And this happened when I thought I had to say something or I'd explode in anger.

"What are you doing, leaving me all alone? I'll feel lonely if I'm alone."

Speaking sulkily, Rangii opened the door and entered. I quickly closed the browser window. I was feeling like teenager who got caught looking at an erotic site by his mom, but that was probably just my imagination.

"We were preparing where you will sleep, Master."

She even tells sudden lies extremely well.

"What is there to confirm? I can sleep comfortably as long as I'm by Sunghoon's

side."

"I feel like you'd be able to sleep well anywhere, even if I weren't there."

Rangii went *buu--* and puffed out her cheeks at being treated so coldly.

"I'm only like that because you're next to me. I'm usually not like that."

Show me proof of that behavior directly.

"With that aside and our stomachs full, it's getting darker, so I'm also getting sleepy. Sunghoon, let's sleep together."

"Why me?"

"I learned that if you don't sleep a lot, you won't grow."

Your real body is Jirisan, so what if you grew more..... Wait, that's not the problem here.

"Why does that work as an answer for me sleeping with you?"

"Because I want to sleep with you."

"I don't want to."

"Uu--. Then I'm going to use force!"

As I looked to see what she'd do if she was using force, Rangii grabbed my hand and started to pull me towards her. .....I'm not sure what you think of me, but I'm not so weak that I'd be pulled around by a kid's strength. But even so, I felt bad seeing Rangii strain so hard so I got up slightly then,

"Upsy-daisy!"

I sat down again.

"Uu--."

Rangii looked cute while puffing out her cheeks. Is this why adults tease kids?

But the important thing is,

"Why're you preparing the blankets?"

Saehee was setting the blankets that I had folded.

"Master said that she wants to sleep."

"Then you should prepare a spot for her in your room."

"Master said that she wants to sleep with you, young master. Even if you continue, my response will not change."

"What's wrong? Isn't it natural for a couple to sleep in the same room?"

Rangii said something I couldn't just ignore.

"No, since when were we a couple?"

"You don't have to be so embarrassed. It's only been a few days, so of course you'll act like that. And also....."

Rangii fidgeted around and blushed.

"Didn't we already have our first time together?"

No, no we didn't. You're wrong. I mustered up my courage to correct her

mistaken thinking.

"Do you know what a first time is?"

"Of course. I'm not a child."

So again, how many times do I have to tell you that you're clearly a child?

"Isn't it when a man and a woman who love each other get married and go sleep in the same room under the same covers?"

Right now what I need is a xylophone. *Ding!*

"Saehee."

"Yes."

"I think that Rangii needs proper sex-ed."

"As the old saying goes, experiencing something once is better than hearing it one hundred times."

Are you telling me to die? I mean, physically and mentally.

"C'mon, let's hurry and sleep together. I want to have our child quickly."

While I was worrying about how to give her sex-ed,

"Why're you all here?"

Narae entered my room. Ah, I'll ask Narae to give Rangii proper education..... and the second I saw Narae, such a thought flew away.

"H, hey! Why're your clothes like that?!"

"Wha, what's wrong with it?!"

I have no idea where Narae's usual fierce appearance went, as she had on a loose-fitting tank top that exposed her belly button and bra strap. And below that, she was wearing hot pants that set her thighs on full display without anywhere for me to comfortably look. To a teenage boy, her attire was enough to set me drooling. I tried to stop my face from blushing, but there was no way I could even, endure it! If a healthy teenager sees the girl he likes exposed in such a stimulating fashion, then..... That, this is just a physiological phenomenon!

"Your clothes are too skimpy!"

"Everybody wears stuff like this, so what's the big deal? What, do you have any complaints?"

The problem is that I don't have any. No, the problem is that I'm liking this too much.

"Your eyes look evil."

Shoot. Seeing Narae stare daggers at me, I gave the only excuse I could right now.

"You have on clothes which, at this point in my life, makes me have trouble deciding where to look, so the fault is entirely on....."

Narae cut me off.

"The fault is on--?"

"Not you, of course."

Seeing me concede her point, she felt satisfied, smiled, and looked around my

room.

"So this is your room? Heeh..... It hasn't changed at all since before?"

"This is also my room."

A guest in my room, Rangii-nim is saying something completely ridiculous. Narae frowned after Rangii spoke.

"Why is this your room?"

"Because I'm going to sleep here too."

"Why would you sleep here? This is his room."

"Isn't it natural for a couple to sleep together?"

While Rangii said something obvious, Narae grabbed and pulled on Rangii's hand. Maybe this was the first time Rangii ever had this happen to her, but she was confused and asked for my help.

"Wha, what's wrong with this woman? A concubine should know her place!"

"Who's a concubine? And polygamy is illegal, so there aren't any concubines!"

Rangii's hair formed a question mark and she asked me a question.

"Is that true?"

I nodded my head. At first Rangii was shocked, but then her face darkened as she spoke to Narae.

"In that case, I feel sorry for you. Sunghoon has already completely fallen for my charm, so you have no chance."

Narae glared at me sharply and spoke.

"Hey."

"No I haven't."

Rangii's tail and ears were standing up sharply.

"But last night, didn't you intensely desire me?"

I gave an excuse right before Narae's hand flew towards me.

"Last night I was cold, so I hugged her as a substitute for a heater. I didn't do anything else, and this all happened while I was half asleep so please forgive me. After all, you know my sleeping habits."

So please don't make a fist.

"Haven't we already seen each other's naked bodies?"

"That was just because you didn't want to take a bath! Don't say something that's so easy to misunderstand!"

I told the truth exactly as it was to Narae. After I finished talking, Rangii opened and closed her mouth like a bird, made a fist and released it, then when she looked like she was going to speak..... She suddenly hugged Narae while crying.

"Uwaaaah! Sunghoon is bullying meeee! E, even though I was so happy that Sunghoon accepted me! But then! Uwaaaaa!!"

Hey! When did I bully you?! I'm just saying exactly what happened! And why are you hugging Narae and not Saehee? Even I've never hugged her before! I'm so jealous!

Confused by Rangii suddenly hugging her, Narae thought hard, sighed, and spoke to me while rubbing Rangii's head.

"You didn't have to say that much, did you? Why were you so harsh?"

".....What?"

Why're you suddenly saying that? I was too confused to answer, as Narae took Rangii's side instantly.

"It's okay, Rangii. Sunghoon was so mean because he was embarrassed that I was here."

Narae interpreted my words completely differently. Enjoying the dream's interpretations more than the dream, huh? [\[4\]](#) However, Rangii actually seemed to be amused by Narae's words. With tears in her eyes, Rangii turned to look up from Narae's bosom and spoke.

"Is that true?"

Narae's glare from above Rangii hurts. Narae, I like it when you think about others like that, but cases like these make me sad. And there's no reason for you to mouth *You're. So. Dead.* at me. Please think about me as well.

"That's right. I was so embarrassed that I was only able to say it like that."

After hearing that what she just heard was a lie, she instantly stopped crying and smiled brightly.

"It's true! Sunghoon's so shy!"



And she ran away from Narae's bosom to go towards me. She reached to hug my neck, and I automatically bent down and held her up by her hip and butt. ....There's no helping it. Even if she's a kid, if I tried to hold her weight only on my neck then I'd die. There's no helping it, for the sake of survival.

When Rangii was hugged against my chest, she turned around to look at Narae and spoke,

"You are truly ready to become Sunghoon's concubine!"

"Like I said, you can't have concubines in this country."

Even though she said it like that, she doesn't seem upset. She was smiling slightly.

.....I'm worried. I'm concerned about Narae's sudden change in attitude towards Rangii. I was going to ask her about that, but there was a sudden weight on my shoulders.

"Snore--."

And I could hear her breathing rhythmically. Hey, are you sleeping right now? Something like that just happened and you fell asleep?

".....Oi."

The end of Rangii's tail twitched slightly.

"Are you sleeping?"

"Because she is exhausted from traveling so far."

I was a little surprised at Saehee, who had erased her presence until now. If you were here, you should've said something, or calmed down Rangii, or said something to Narae, or insulted me! Wait, cancel the last thing.

"You brat, all you did in the car was sleep too."

"She always needed a lot of sleep."

.....Geez, her body is really inefficient.

"Then have her sleep comfortably in your room. Here."

I tried to give Rangii to her, but Saehee spoke abruptly.

"That is not possible."

"Why?"

"Master is sleeping because the young master's scent and heat put her mind at ease. If you move her to my room, she will wake up."

You just nonchalantly called it your room. Your own, sole room.

"So?"

"You can sleep with Master in my room."

"Denied. She can just sleep here."

".....Tch."

Don't click your tongue.

I carefully released Rangii's arms from my neck, and put her on the blanket to not wake her up.

"Uu--ung."

She moved around a bit, but thankfully she didn't wake up. For some reason, I felt embarrassed that I thought to myself, *so she can sleep on blankets that have my scent as well*. Should I wash the blankets tomorrow?

I led Narae and Saehee out of the room and I closed the door. Whew. Since Rangii's sleeping in my room, the only place left for me to sleep is the sofa. Well, sleeping on the sofa isn't that bad. Maybe it's because a lot of stuff happened today, but I'm tired. Should I try and sleep early today?

"Hey."

It seems like the day's still early to her.

"Yeah?"

"I'll understand, to some extent, your situation with Rangii."

I'm praying that her understanding won't turn into misunderstanding.

"So don't overreact when it comes to Rangii. She's only sticking to you because she's a lonely little kid who's all alone."

So you did misunderstand. It seems like you don't know, but Rangii doesn't know anything and she's completely serious. That's why she's even scarier.

"If you react like that, then you seem like a real lolicon."

"You kept calling me a lolicon until now."

Narae smiled like a figure from an impressionistic painting.

"Are you really?"

"No I am not."

"Then it's fine. I know you're not like that so....."

Narae blushed and mumbled something, but I didn't hear it. I was asking her what she said because I was curious when,

"Please excuse me while you are rubbing salt in your wounds."

Saehee suddenly interrupted. Saehee cut in between Narae and me, and she spoke to Narae.

"Narae-nim. There is something I wish to tell you."

"Whatever. .....but please, stop adding -nim to my name; it's weird."

"It is a habit."

"But....."

"It is a habit."

".....Do what you want."

Is there no one who can beat Saehee besides Rangii?

"So what're you curious about?"

"What is your size, Narae-nim?"

"Size?"

"Chest size."

"Wha, what?!"

Narae's face turned bright red, and she glared at me. Why're you looking at me? Even though I haven't done anything? Can't you see that I'm embarrassed too?"

"Wha, what the heck are you asking?!"

"Is your chest growing even now?"

Not caring at all that we were embarrassed, Saehee continued on this topic; I was able to realize the truth of the saying *water downstream can only be clear*

*when the water upstream is as well.* [5]

No, why would you say something like that in front of me? I'm curious too, but..... , wait, that's not it!

"I, I don't know!"

"If you do not know, then there is no choice."

Saehee, in contrast to Narae who was blushing and flustered, was expressionless as usual, put her arms between Narae's armpits, then,

*Squish.*

Befitting the above sound-effect, Saehee started to feel around Narae's huge breasts.

"It seems you are still a C-cup. However, this size. In some years, the chance of becoming a D-cup is high."

I, I'm so jealous! Couldn't I do that....., no that's not it!

"You, you, you, what're you doing?!"

Seeing Saehee pushing down on Narae, and how Narae was filling with both shame and anger, a teenage boy like me was about to have his vigor explode. Will, will I be able to sleep properly tonight?

"Ah--, wait, now, ack--, this is.....uht. D, don't....."

"You are truly a member of the Bear Clan. However, we will be okay for at least a year."

Saehee having just given her conclusion, she took her hands off Narae's breasts,

moved in front of Narae, and bowed her head slightly.

"Thank you for your cooperation."

Narae covered her chest with her hands, moved away from Saehee..... and hid naturally behind me.

"I'm, I'm going to kill you."

I could see from the tears filling her eyes that she was totally furious. Touching an unmarried woman's breasts as much as you want, being able to hold that feeling and size..... no, I should stop thinking like that. Because right now I'm jealous of how Saehee was able to massage Narae's breasts as much as she wanted solely because of her gender..... I said stop!!



"Why would you want to know someone's chest size?!"

Narae-nim seemed to have recovered from Saehee erotically measuring Narae's chest size and the chance of her future development, and she shouted while glaring at Saehee. Ah--. Narae doesn't know she's a member of the Bear Clan, right?

"I did this because you are a member of the Bear Clan."

"What's that?"

Saehee answered Narae's question.

"It is a gang of big-breasted women."

"Did you think I'd understand from that?!!"

Does Saehee have a few screws loose in her head? I simply explained what the Bear Clan is to Narae in place of Saehee who looked like she had no plans to explain. That they are blood relatives of Ungnyeo, the one from the Dangun myth, even that they awaken strange powers when their chest size gets bigger than a D-cup.

Narae carefully asked me something after she heard everything.

".....What happens if I awaken those powers?"

Despite having solely been listening, Saehee answered her question.

"You will lose your free will and become Ungnyeo's puppet."

"Hey, dammit!"

Even if you say that, how can you say she'll be a puppet? A *puppet*!

"Please do not worry. As long as you are careful, such an event will not happen. As long as the head does not show herself, such small breasts will not awaken those powers. However..... Narae-nim, if you stay by the young master's side, you will be a bother to Master. So while Master is sleeping, please leave this house. As I am not as generous as the young master, I cannot allow you to stay here."

.....Hearing Saehee's demand to kick Narae out, rather than Narae herself, I was the one who got angry.

"What the heck's so bad for Rangii if Narae stays here?! Don't just make stuff up!"

Having just lost my temper and raised my voice at Saehee, I heard Saehee's contrasting voice.

"Young master, do you know the Dangun myth?"

How could I not. I even know that Rangii's the tiger from the myth.

"What about it?"

"The myth is incorrect."

".....What?"

Saehee casually spoke.

"Master underwent the test same as Ungnyeo and mastered the magic to turn into a human. And as Master was able to turn into a human, we also learned the magic from Master and became able to transform to human form as well."

Ah--! I was just now able to understand why I felt like something was wrong when Rangii transformed into a human. Based on the Dangun myth, it says that the tiger couldn't endure the test and ran away. That's why it couldn't turn into a human. But Rangii can. Not only that, but Baduk and Saehee, Rangii's kin, are able turn into humans like this.

"However, Hwanung did not choose Master; he chose Ungnyeo. After that, Master was sealed away. Do you understand now? Why Narae-nim cannot stay near Master?"

".....Ah!"

Narae gave a shout as she realized something from what Saehee said. But I don't have a clue. So what're you trying to say?

"So what do you mean by that?"

Saehee looked at me pitifully as if my head was full of suffocating smoke.

"I shall provide the young master with a hint as your head is completely empty."

I'm sorry for being dumb.

"You treat Master as a child, correct?"

"Because she really is a kid."

"Yes. As you said, Master is still young in her mind. **That is why she transforms into that form.** So then, do you know what personality traits are common to children?"

Common personality traits? As I've had to suffer domestic life with my little cousins since I was young, I know that much very well.

"They whine, laugh easily, cry easily, are honest, don't really think, are true to their feelings, and greedy?"

"You know this well."

".....Have you still not realized?"

Why are you looking at me like I'm pathetic, Miss Narae?

"Master is so pitiable, to have such a half-wit as her other half."

"No, but so what?!"

"You really are stupid."

"It's okay to be stupid so at least tell me why you're treating me like an idiot."

Narae frowned.

"Do you think we can tell you something like this? You know, it would make Rangii look bad if we told you, right?"

When Narae, whom I trusted, betrayed me, something within me snapped.

"Fine! I get it, I'm an idiot, so stop! Since I'm gonna go sleep!"

Giving off the feeling of *I'm pissed!*, I walked past Narae and Saehee and went into the living room. The two, who were masters of treating me like an idiot by now, followed me in.

"Where're you going to sleep?"

I shouldn't act like this to Narae when she's worrying about me, but I was unconsciously curt with my reply.

"I can sleep on the sofa."

"Even if it's summer, you'll catch a cold if you sleep there. Instead, sleep in my room."

The anger that was filling me up to the top of my head was replaced by embarrassment. I turned around and grabbed tightly onto Narae's hands.

"Narae. Thank you for your feelings, but you should care for your own body....."

Narae shook off my hands and hit me hard in the stomach. It wasn't a fist to rule the world, but it was the fist to rule my consciousness.

"Kuwok!"

"Wha, what're you saying! If you're going to sleep in my room, then of course I have to sleep with Saehee!"

I was joking. And if you really mean that then I definitely don't have to sleep on the sofa. However,

"I refuse."

Saehee dissented.

"Huh? Why?"

Saehee answered Narae's question.

"I have no plans in the least to sleep in the same room as someone with such massive lumps of fat. I do not get off on being crushed by those heavy breasts."

"Th, they aren't that big! And this much is.....!"

Narae blushed and said something weird; then there was a *poof!* above her head and steam rose as she started to get mad at me.

"Don't make me say weird things!"

"But why're you getting mad at me?!"

"This is your fault!"

It's Saehee's fault. Regardless, maybe because of the subject, Saehee's body grabbed my attention despite my complete ignorance to it thus far. Saehee's actually quite slim? Is her black modernized hanbok keeping her figure hidden? Could she actually be on the small side even for women her age? Could this be

because Rangii is her master?

"I was always like this even when I was human."

".....But I didn't say anything?"

"Is there a problem?"

.....I should stop talking.

"Because of that,"

Saehee changed the subject.

"The young master will sleep in my room."

""What?!"

Towards an extremely strange direction.

"Although it is my duty to attend to Master, it is my duty to attend to the young master as well. Even in nightly duties."

Ababababababa.

"Because Master is still young and cannot release all of the young master's overflowing sexual desire, and that the big-breasted Narae-nim is harboring much sexual desire, it would make no difference if you left, as, with my brilliant techniques, my frail body can satisfy the young master."

Uh, is it really okay for you to have just said something so incredibly dangerous?

"What the heck does that mean?!"

"I am joking, young master who lacks a sense of humor."

I know. That I'm bad at telling jokes. And you're the same.

"From now on, if you're going to tell a joke, say *okay*, *what I'm about to say is a joke*. Because I can't tell if you're joking or serious."

"I was serious to some extent. If it is for Master's sake, no matter what perverted fetishes the young master may have, no matter what positions you demand, I shall accept and do them all."

"I don't have anything like that though?!"

This woman, is she not even blushing when she's saying such dirty things? I forcibly ended the conversation because if she kept talking like this I wouldn't be able to sleep properly.

"A, anyway! I can sleep on the sofa, so you two sleep in your own rooms!"

I ignored Narae who still wasn't over the shock that she just received, and Saehee, who didn't look any different than normal, and went to lie down on the sofa; but Saehee brought up something I couldn't ignore.

"There is no need for the young master to sleep on the sofa. Because I can sleep in the same room as Master."

Is this what it means to switch one's way of thinking?

".....You're right."

Why wasn't I able to think of that? .....what do I mean, why?! It's because I couldn't think straight thanks to Saehee's weird words!

I calmly spoke to the main culprit, Saehee.

"But....."

Saehee glanced at me and continued,

"If I sleep under a blanket covered in the young master's thick stuff, I may become pregnant....."

"Hey, dammiiiiit!"

"If the young master has Miss Narae leave, such a thing need not occur."

"I won't leave even if you tell me to."

Narae cut in and gave her opinion. Thank you for your feelings, but if Rangii and Saehee leave the house, then you should leave too.

"I was joking."

Saehee smiled slightly.

"I believe I was affected by the alcohol I drank before."

.....But I feel like it's been kind of a long time since you drank alcohol? And if you drink, isn't your complexion supposed to change? Why is a supposedly drunk person's face so pale?

"Well then, please excuse me now."

Maybe Saehee was ignoring Narae and me while we were stunned, but she turned around and went into my room. With Narae and me left in the living room like that,

".....We should sleep now."

".....Yeah."

Feeling like I got played for some reason, I entered my own room. And then I went,

"Saeheeeeeee!!"

I screamed loudly so that the drunk phantom could hear me shout her name, because all I could see in my room were a thousand women's panties.

It's hot. It's strangely hot. Considering that I locked the door because of the uninvited guests, it's strangely hot. I even have the fan on. I feel like a heater was placed on my chest. In the end, it was too hot so I woke up.

The morning sunlight shining through the window blinded my eyes. If I had heard sparrows chirping, this would have been a classic morning.

I scratched my itchy head and got up.

"U--nya--ah."

I can hear a weird sound. What was that? I found the answer when I rubbed my eyes and looked down. It's Rangii. Rangii was stretched on my belly like a dog on one of the hottest days of the year. From above, she'd look like a + character. But the real question is, why she's sleeping here? Even though I definitely had her sleep in my room?

On the topic of bothering someone while they're sleeping, with Rangii sleeping deeply on top of me, I poked her in the side to wake her up.

"Hm--nya."

She's sleeping. She's sleeping well. Again, *poke, poke*.

"Nya--nyaii."

Even though she's flinching, she's not opening her eyes. *Sigh*. This just makes me want to try harder. I cracked my knuckles, and lifted up Rangii's shirt.

The door opened.

"....."

".....Hahaha, this is a misunderstanding."

Seeing Narae's face freeze as she opened the door and saw me try and tickle Rangii in the sides, I gave the best excuse I could.

"Perveeeert!!"

**Don't try this at home.** Please do not try to imitate a flying knee kick, as it is dangerous.

In the end, Narae carried Rangii out of the room, so I went out into the living room to go to the bathroom and wash my face. I was going to the bathroom when I saw Rangii sitting on her knees in the living room, frowning, and Narae sitting on the sofa, speaking fiercely to Rangii.

What're they doing?

"And so! That's why you can't thoughtlessly go into a boy's room at night!"

Narae was teaching common sense to Rangii. Good job, Narae. Teach her human common sense. .....Especially because I can't teach her.

"I know that. But isn't Sunghoon an exception?"

"How could there be an exception! No, you *especially* can't do that with Sunghoon!"

"But why not?"

--Uk."

Narae stopped talking. Normally she'd have grabbed her by the collar, shaken her up and down, and said, *if I say you can't, then you can't!*, but she's talking to Rangii. Even if it's just her appearance, she looks like a kid.

"Because he's a pervert lolicon! He might attack you!"

I also want to become a kid. Then Narae might be a little more caring to me.

Living room on the third day of summer vacation after eating breakfast.

I wanted to give myself up to the wings of freedom and experience the feeling of, *so this is how it feels to just laze around~*. But because the number of residents at home suddenly increased, I had to face reality before I could feel such happiness.

"Sunghoon!"

"What?"

I answered while maintaining the pose of a king lion, with my back deep against the sofa and going *are there any fun shows on cable right now~* with the remote

control.

"Play with me."

Was that a command and not a request? I turned my gaze to focus on Rangii. A happy smile. Seeing such a bright smile, it seemed like she expected me to listen to any of her commands. It seems like she doesn't think she'll be rejected, not even a little.

Of course, I'm a man who goes against expectations.

"Play with Narae."

Is this what it feels like to be a husband throwing responsibility at his wife take care of the kids on a weekend?! Although Narae isn't my actual wife. But based on what just happened, I found that if Narae looks after Rangii, then she can teach Rangii all kinds of unmentionable things that I'd have trouble with.

Narae will view me not just as a lolicon, but a pervert, sexual harasser, degenerate; but if that's what it takes for Rangii to get a proper education, I can bear it.

"Narae said she's going back to her home, so she can't play."

"What?"

"No I'm not."

Narae came out of the kitchen, sat next to me, and denied Rangii's words.

"Who's going back home? And you. Are you that happy that I'm going back home?"

"I am not."

"Really?"

"Really."

"I can't ever trust you."

Rangii looked blankly at the two of us having a conversation, and spoke while shaking her tail slowly from side to side.

"Hm? Didn't you say that you were going home?"

"I said I was going, then coming back, you little tiger."

"I'm not little!"

I have to object to that.

Moving on, it seems like Narae is extremely adaptable to reality. I mean that because of what she went through yesterday. She casually accepted the truths that would have thrown me into a state of denial-- and despite her confusion over the situation, she was kindly playing along with Rangii. I thought to myself that she is, indeed, Narae.

In other words, I'm still in denial over this reality.

"But why are you going home?"

Narae blushed slightly.

"Th, the heck? What does that have to do with you?"

"I'm just curious."

"There's just something I need to get!"

Huh?

"Then like yesterday, you could....."

In the middle of saying *then like yesterday, you could have someone bring it for you*, I realized that Narae's face was turning red. In short, it's not something she can ask on the phone, or it's something that she can't entrust to a stranger. The conclusion has appeared.

It seems like Narae has sensed what I was thinking.

"What're you thinking right now, you pervert! I, I'm gonna kill you!"

"But what did I do?"

Right now I, uh. It's not like I was even thinking, *does that mean Narae's wearing the same underwear as yesterday?*

"Y, your eyes look evil!"

"Aren't these the eyes of an innocent child?"

I gave a light joke to change the mood.

"....."

"....."

"....."

I don't know when Saehee came in, but these feminine three stared wordlessly at me, leaving an irreparable wound on my delicate emotions.

"Sunghoon, I don't think that's right."

Shut up, tiger.

While Narae left, I decided to clean the house. Rangii and Saehee are here too, but this is a pubescent boy's desire to clean the house as long as Narae is staying here. I clean the house everyday anyway, so today I'm going to go out of my way to clean under the sofa, the windowsill, the windows, the bathroom, and the sink. This much should be enough. But there's a person, no, a phantom, who was going against my plans.

Who do you think it is?

"Play with me--."

Rangii had been lounging on my legs, using them as a pillow since earlier. You brat. Is there a ghost that died of boredom possessing your mind? Though, I suppose there is indeed a ghost-like paranormal brat stuck to me.

"You appear to be in a bad mood, young master."

".....You're mistaken."

You sure notice things well even though your eyes are glued to the TV, watching an anime.

"Can't you watch TV with Saehee?"

"I have the most fun when I play with you."

That's an appreciated, yet useless, statement. If you go as far as to say that, then

I have no choice but to play with you; but I already already made up my mind to clean, so I'll have to postpone playing with you until after that.

"I'm still busy right now. Because I have to clean."

At the same time, the phantoms reacted as if I had said some kind of taboo.

Rangii's jaw dropped, and Saehee looked at me with wide eyes. The heck's up with their reactions? Is it that weird for me to say I'll clean?

"Isn't that what Saehee does?"

"Please tell me directly to clean instead, young master. There is no need to change the subject through such sly means."

I decided who to argue with first.

"I'm not trying to change the subject. And these days, men are able to clean too."

And not just cleaning. There are those who manage *all* the chores around the house. Like me. This isn't an era when women have to raise the cows, so anyone can do this much.

"I'm the one who normally does the chores here."

"Uwa--. Amazing."

Something about seeing Rangii look so genuinely awed made me feel great.

"Anyway, that's why I can't play with you. Okay?"

"Then I'll help clean too."

As Rangii was saying *Aren't I good? Aren't I nice? Then please rub my head. Or hug me!* with her whole body, I decided to give her a mistrustful look.

".....What is that look for?"

Yeah. I feel like, with a bit of polishing, she'll grow up to be a good person to talk with. .....No. If she grows up wrong, then she might end up like Saehee. Never grow old.

"Have you ever cleaned before?"

"A long time ago, I was trying to lie down to sleep, but a hill was in my way, so I swept it away with my tail."

The scale is too big! Uselessly big!

"That is not called cleaning."

"Then I haven't. But I'll work hard to learn if you teach me."

What should I do? It doesn't seem like using this opportunity to teach Rangii how to clean is a bad thing. And it seems like this brat will learn well if I teach her once. Hm..... Great. It might take a while, but I'll think of it as an investment for the future.

"Then let's do it together. Since I'll teach you how to clean. Are you going to keep watching TV?"

I poked at Saehee who was intensely watching an anime.

"I believe that learning more about the common sense of modern society would be better."

I'm afraid that your idea of common sense is neither common nor sensible to

other people.

"Then shouldn't you watch the news?"

"It is boring."

"A drama?"

"It is the day time."

"How about a variety show?"

"Is that the one where people play around like children?"

Apologize, dammit. Apologize to all the variety show comedians.

"What is it? Do you want to say that my tastes are childish? So the young master is a completely senseless human, unable to accept cultural diversity."

I shouldn't argue. I don't think I can win it.

Unlike Saehee, who was busy playing around, Rangii was even more help than I thought. All Rangii did was move stuff so it wouldn't get in the way of the vacuum cleaner, but at least she was better than Saehee, who complained about the noise, took out headphones from somewhere, and had her eyes glued to the animation. She also took a clean rag to wipe the floors, the windowsills, and the glasses of the windows. I thought that, in comparison to Saehee whose biggest work was lifting her feet as I cleaned the floor under her, Rangii is a really, really good kid.

"What is it? You have the shining eyes of a rotten pollock."

You're quite hurtful.

The finished laundry marked the end of the house cleaning that I spontaneously planned to do. Rangii and I were on the clean floor of the living room, catching our breaths.

"Cleaning is harder than I thought."

Rangii said this happily despite her words, and I patted her head.

"But it's nice when everything's clean, isn't it?"

"I feel like I've expelled all the noisy annoyances from the front yard."

Your example is strange, Rangii. But anyway, after all the moving around from cleaning, it's a little hot. No, rather than a little hot, at this level, it's extremely hot. There's even sweat on my back. Normally I'd turn on an electric fan and dry my sweat with that, but Narae will be here soon. I don't want to stink of sweat when I'm with the girl I like. I should just take a shower.

"I'm going to go take a shower and come back."

"What's a shower?"

"He is speaking of washing his body with falling water."

So you can give such good explanations even while watching TV with headphones on.

"So you're saying you're going to wash yourself? Then I'll wash with you too."

"I taught you how to wash yourself yesterday."

She had an expression like she was going *uwa!* and looked shocked.

".....I can't remember."

She looked away and said something that was clearly a lie. Hey, you brat. Play tricks on someone who would actually get tricked. But still, wouldn't it be good to wash with her once? After moving so much, cooling ourselves off with cold water would help us stand the heat.

So I called out the name of the phantom who's meant to take care of Rangii.

"Saehee."

"If I get water on me....."

I cut Saehee off.

"I'm going to wash first, so do whatever you want."

Before Saehee could say anything, I went into the bathroom and closed the door. Thank goodness I always keep spare underwear stored in the bathroom. I took off my clothes and comfortably washed my body.

It wasn't that long since I left the bathroom to Rangii, who was disappointed, and Saehee, who was glaring at me, that Narae came back with a suitcase. Rather than simply bringing some underwear, she looks like she's about to go on a trip. Along with the bags from yesterday, is that 3 bags in total? .....How long do you plan on staying here? I'd welcome you with open arms, but I don't know how long my sanity will last given the shoujo-filter situation when I'm living with Narae, a girl whom I view as a member of the opposite sex.

"What? Got any complaints?"

Narae was looking at me fiercely, so I could only give a false answer.

"I don't."

"Your eyes say that you do."

"It must be your imagination."

"But I don't think it is."

She's skilled at reading my mind since we were childhood friends. And the moment when I thought, *I guess it'd be okay if you found out that I like you*,

**"It appears that I have forgotten to bring clothes to change into."**

I was surprised by Saehee's strangely loud voice and turned my head,

"S, stupid! Don't look!!"

And Narae grabbed my head with her hands,

--*Crack?!*--

And she forcibly twisted my head. Even while feeling the pain of having my neck broken, I saw her. I saw Saehee naked, without even a pair of panties on, not even trying to hide her body. But more than Saehee's naked body, I was too occupied with the descent of the god of death, Yama.

"You saw."

"Wha, what are you saying?"

"Don't look at another woman's naked body as you please!!"

Seeing the bag flying at me, two thoughts came to my head. Why the heck are you getting mad, Narae? And.....

"My apologizes, Narae-nim. This was **my mistake.**"

Was this her plan all along?

"Could you please go grocery shopping for dinner?"

I closed the book I was reading after Saehee's words. Although it was the scene when Kinkotsuman was giving a love confession to his little sister who's known for her thighs, I can read the book later. At least a book won't dig a trap because I didn't listen to it.

"What should I buy?"

"I wrote it down for the young master who has terrible memory."

Saehee-nim, with her excellent memory, spoke kindly to me and handed me a note. Let's see..... Green onions, onions, garlic, lettuce, peppers, 9 pounds of pork.

"Oi."

"What is the problem, young master?"

"How many people do you think there are for me to buy 9 pounds of pork? No, before that, didn't we eat meat for lunch too?"

"And that is why you are complaining?"

I took a step back.

"No, that's not what I mean. I guess I'm trying to say that only eating meat will

be a very imbalanced diet, and it will be bad for our health."

And get tired of it, too.

"I am proposing a balanced diet. This is not something for the young master to worry about."

Ah, is that so.

"But if we only eat meat, then we might have indiges--....."

"Are you unaware of meat that is easily digested?"[\[6\]](#)

That's not what that means.

"Master likes it more than anything else."

Of course a tiger phantom would like meat. There's no helping it. It's lame, but I'll tell her the realistic problem.

"I don't have money. Eating like this will use up all the living expenses until the end of the month."

"Is that so?"

I'm extremely aware of the fact that, if I keep wasting the living expenses I have left, I'll be in trouble by the end of the month. Since I don't know when my parents will come back, it's best to save money. It's definitely not because I'm tired of eating meat.

Saehee suddenly took out a wallet from a scroll and handed me two 50,000 won bills.

"If you require money, please ask of me, young master who is unable to maintain

his life."

I will ask.

"Where did you get that money from?"

"Long ago, I bought some land in Myeong-dong."

So you're a rich landowner?

"Please use the rest as pocket money, beggar-nim."

".....Really?"

The corners of Saehee's mouth rose.

"Yes. Please buy a dirty magazine with that money to motivate yourself for self-improvement."

Shut up.

I got a shopping basket and talked to Narae and Rangii who were playing a boardgame in the living room.

"I'm going to go shopping for a bit."

"Are you leaving?"

Seeing Rangii's shining eyes, I had a bad feeling and took the initiative.

"Don't follow me."

Of course, if that had worked, then she wouldn't be Rangii.

"No! I want to go too~. When I went yesterday, I had fun because there were lots of interesting things."

While saying that, Rangii clung on to and rubbed her cheek against my legs. I want to bring you too, but while you're trying to find something fun, I would have to find a hole to hide in.

Bringing Rangii outside with me isn't a huge problem, but it's a different story for my sanity. I'm saying that I'm sorry to tell a charming yet not charming Rangii that she can't follow me. Can't you just be cute in a normal way?

"Stay at home today."

"Uu--."

Rangii's ears drooped and she sucked on her finger.

"Then, how about I go?"

The already-beautiful Narae-nim's words sparked my interest. I, I, I'm going shopping with Narae? Isn't that romance between newlyweds?! Walking arm in arm, wondering *What should we do for side dishes today? I'm having you. Oh my.....* Wait, no! What in the world am I thinking right now?! While I was busy with my shoujo-filtered delusions, Rangii puffed out her cheeks and sprung at Narae.

"You can't!"

"Rangii?"

Narae was embarrassed. Rangii approached Narae from behind, wrapping her legs around Narae's waist and grasping Narae's breasts with her hands, and even I would be embarrass..... *puhak!* This is enough to make me have a nosebleed. The stimulation from seeing Rangii's hands unable to grab all of Narae's breasts, with

their shape constantly morphing and sticking out, was too strong!

"If I can't go, then Narae can't go!"

"Wait, Rangii! Let go for now..... ahh!"

This seems like a scene restricted for those 18 years and over. I overcame my desire with my overflowing consideration and turned around.

"I'm going to go."

"Okay."

"Ahu, Ra, Rangii!!"

Putting on my shoes as if I was running away,

".....*Hueh?* Something feels amiss."

I ran away before Rangii realized.

I had 40,000 won left after buying all the groceries that Saehee wrote down. To a normal high schooler, this could be called a huge amount of money. Because I take care of all our living expenses, this sadly doesn't feel like a lot of money. Of course, compared to my usual pocket money, this is huge. I guess this could be called the feeling a bank teller has when he receives his paycheck. It's hard to describe.

Anyway, the fact is that I got some unexpected money. While thinking about how I can spend the money so that the rumours of my great spending habits would become known, a doll store that I normally would have just walked past caught my eye. There was a disgusting sight of couples looking at dolls in the

store.

Couples for Hell, singles for Paradise.

*Somebody* out here is unable to properly confess to the girl he likes because of some random tiger getting in the way, while those two are plastered together in this hot weather. The man bought the woman a doll, and the woman gave thanks and smiled happily as they walked out of the store.

I sighed, feeling sorry for myself as I thought, *when will my youth arrive?* but while walking home, I stopped.

Yeah. What if I use this money to buy a doll as a gift for Narae. She didn't play with dolls even when she was young, but she's still a girl. At the very least, she won't hate it. Even if this is a bit sudden, it should be okay. Great. I'll buy her one. Maybe Narae will say she's thankful and give me a light hug.....

It was then.

Rangii appeared, had her arms up in a hurray, and clung on to me.

.....No, why're you bothering me even when I'm in the middle of my delusions? I shook my head and tried to erase Rangii's sudden appearance. But, like her real form, she refused to disappear. Sure. I can buy you one, too. Well, since you also helped clean this morning, you can consider it a reward for your good deeds.

I went inside the store. I answered the store clerk's greeting with a slight bow and looked around at the dolls. What kind of doll should I buy for Narae and Rangii? Hm. Yeah. Since Narae's a member of the Bear Clan, I'll buy her a bear doll; and since Rangii is a tiger phantom, I'll buy her a rabbit doll. It's totally not because a tiger doll is more expensive. I found reasonably priced dolls, and got it gift-wrapped plainly, and.....

"To get gift-wrapping, you need to give 5,000 more Won."

"Please put them in a bag."

No, I put them in a plain old bag and left.

.....But I feel like I've forgotten something. Could it just be my imagination? I felt like something was off while heading home.

"I'm home."

"You're back!"

"Good work."

.....This is a taste of the happiness that I'll feel when we get married. Wouldn't life be worth living if a wife like Narae and a daughter like Rangii came out to see me?

"But what is that?"

Rangii pointed at the white bag in one of my hands and spoke.

"A present."

I answered shortly, put down the groceries in the kitchen, and gave the dolls to Narae and Rangii.

"Oh....."

"Uwa!"

Narae held the doll and looked happy yet surprised, and seeing Rangii smile so widely, I unconsciously had a mile on my face as well.

"Wh, what is this all of a sudden?"

'No, I mean. I thought of you on the way and....."

I'm sorry I couldn't think of anything cool to say.

"It's a present! It's a wedding gift!"

"It's not a wedding gift."

Even though I'm saying this kind of stuff so easily. Seeing the two of them so glad, I also felt good. Ah, how nice and.....

"Do you have nothing for me?"

"He--ek?!"

Even while I freaked out when Saehee suddenly appeared, I thought to myself, *crap!* Yeah. The reason why I felt something was off. It was Saehee. I carefully gave an excuse while large drops of sweat formed on my back.

"That's....."

"I know. I know that such cute things do not fit me. I will prepare dinner."

.....In the end, to try and get Saehee less mad, I took care of preparing dinner and cleaning the dishes.

"Young master, this tastes awful."

It wasn't enough.

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## Notes:

1. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dopo\\_\(clothing\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dopo_(clothing)) ↵

2. A character from a short Korean short story that was written in 1936, who, by the otaku standards in this age, very closely follows the *tsundere ojou-sama* archetype.

↵

3. Possibly a reference to a quote of debated origin, "Even if the world ends tomorrow, I will plant an apple tree." ↵

4. A proverb, meaning that people has a tendency to prefer their own (favourable) interpretations of things, rather than experiencing the things themselves.

↵

5. A proverb, which says that the leading figure must set a good example before the followers also do good deeds. ↵

6. One of the well-known lines from a Korean web comic called *the Sound of Your Heart*. ↵

## Part 2

This is the part where you get clubbed by a bear-- in multiple meanings at once.

*Translator: Dijon*

*Editor: Narane*

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.....It's cold. It's July, the hottest month of the year, but I was woken up from my sleep again by the cold. My entire body was shivering from the cold feeling on my stomach. I opened my eyes and looked down.

“Have you woken up?”

The phantom, who expressed with her whole body that she was angry just yesterday evening, looked at me with her two shining eyes and had her hands on my chest.

Something about her position is erotic.

“.....What’re you doing?”

“There is something I must urgently do.”

I took out my phone and checked the time. It's 3 in the morning. Even if you have something to say, there's no reason to say it at this time.

“Tomorrow..... Tell me *then*. I'm sleepy.”

“Unless it is now, I am unable to avoid Master's eyes.”

“And what’re you going to say while avoiding Rangii?”

The corners of Saehee's mouth rose.

"I said I would *do* something, not *say* something, young master."

You mean an action?

"Please do it tomorrow. I'm going to sleep, so get off of me."

"I cannot."

"Oi."

Saehee ignored my words entirely, bent her body to have her face right in front of my nose, and then,

"I do not know why my Master would become enamored with a piece of trash no better than scum, but I truly wish I could kill you, young master."

She made a chill run down my back.

"..... Are you serious?"

"Of course, young master. My hatred for you is equal to your stupidity."

Saehee smiled a smile that froze my heart, and grabbed my neck with one hand.

"Although it would aid Master if I were to end your life now, I cannot as I do not wish to see Master's hurt face a second time. I truly hope you view your continued life as Master's kindness."

"Sae, Saehee?"

"It would be best to remember my words, the leech-like-young-master-who-only-continues-to-live-because-of-Master's-kindness. How Master must have felt

while waiting four thousand years for the young master, the great happiness she must have felt because of you, how she felt when she followed you to Seoul, I hope you will think about them as you act in the future. I hope you will think, and think, and please, never forget to think about that."

I couldn't breathe. I couldn't move even a finger. With me unable to talk, as if in a nightmare,

"Ah, and please do not feel too badly about my erasing your memories of this night's events."

Along with Saehee's hate for me, I could only see her hand against my head.

"Because this is simply my way of venting."

Were you that upset after I didn't buy you a doll?! Why're you doing this even when you have so much money?!

Seeing dozens, hundreds of hands cover me, the last thing I felt was an inexplicable sense of unfairness as I lost consciousness.

I woke up today from the sunlight coming in through the window. Uu—. I should hang up curtains. I moved around on the bed to avoid the light and curled up my body. At night I was..... Huh? What was that last night.....? Ah, yeah. I had a strange nightmare and wasn't able to sleep well. What the heck am I thinking of? The only thing I have to think of is how I can comfortably sleep more.

Click.

I heard the door open.

"Sunghoon! It's morning!"

.....No, it's Rangii's voice. I slightly opened one eye and looked towards the door.

Rangii had on the same style of hanbok as yesterday, entered the room, and ran towards me with a *bang-bang*. .....no, maybe *pitapat* would fit better. Because she was turning round and round in the middle of the room.

Ee—ya. Young people are truly full of life. But mornings are tiring for me because of my age.

“Yeah, it’s morning.....”

And I went off into dreamland again.

“Huh?”

I let out a sound to show that I was sleeping.

“Snore.....”

“Wake up!”

“I’m—sleepy.”

“Don’t you have to get up early so we can have a date?”

I partially woke up after she talked about a date.

“What do you mean, a date?”

But my body was still curled up under the blanket.

“Saehee said today that men and women who are in love go on things called dates.”

The moment I heard the name Saehee, I felt an inexplicable chill. Why did that happen? Ah, is it because she said something strange to Rangii so she could

tease me?

.....Well, that isn't important compared to Rangii who's trying to make me get up.

"Yeah, yeah. People who're dating go on dates. So I'm going to go have a date with drowsiness in dreamland."

People who need a lot of sleep have it tough in the morning. Since a sudden mishap like what happened yesterday won't occur, I don't have a reason to get up at this time.

"How much longer are you going to sleep! Someone's been preparing breakfast since dawn!"

But I feel like a sudden mishap has just occurred. I quickly got up and begged Narae for mercy.

"I'm up!"

Narae smiled.

"If you're not fully awake, I can help you."

I fully woke up after seeing you in an apron. But if my eyes aren't mistaken?!

"N, naked apron?!"

Bam!

"Wh, who's naked?! I clearly have clothes on!"

Narae blushed and did a spin. Ah, because she's wearing a small tank top and hot pants, I mistook her for being naked. The strength of a human's imagination

is scary. Narae's kick hurts.

“Hm? What’s a naked apron?”

Nibbling on her finger, Rangii made a question mark with her hair and asked me a question I didn’t need to answer while I was underneath and being stepped on by Narae.

“A naked apron is when a woman, or a man, wears only a small dress which is normally used as protection for clothes or as a decoration.”

Because Saehee answered for me.

“Have you gotten up, young master?”

I suddenly got a headache after seeing Saehee. Is it because I was too worried because of her yesterday?

“Rather than gotten up, I got woken up.”

“I have almost prepared the meal, so please prepare to eat.”

There was a tasty smell in the house.

“Soybean stew?”

“You’re a great competitor for Baduk’s role.”

I scratched my head at Saehee’s insult-like compliment.

“Shut up.”

I washed quickly, and when I was about to go out, the door swung open. It was Rangii. This brat, she opened the bathroom door without a care in the world. No, was it my fault for not locking the door?

“What?”

“Saehee told me to wash my face first.”

You look pretty happy for someone who just got told to wash herself.

“Yeah. I’m all done so I’m leaving.”

“Huh? Weren’t you going to wash me?”

What’s that nonsense?

“I taught you how to wash yourself.”

“Wasn’t that how to take a bath? I haven’t learned how to wash my face in human form yet.”

Seeing Rangii smile so delightedly, I wanted to hit her on the top of her head, but I held it in. No matter the reason, solution, or the process, I can’t get punish her for trying to learn how to live in the human world. I let out a small sigh and beckoned Rangii forward with my hand.

“Right. I will fall for your trick just for today.”[\[1\]](#)

“Huh? You’re copying me.”

Rangii ran towards me while saying that, and when she was by the sink..... She’s short. I set Rangii on top of the bathroom stool. Hm, about the right height. I put a towel around Rangii’s neck and had her put her head down.

.....Saehee hadn't braided her hair yet so her hair fell forward.

“.....Your hair's really long.”

I moved Rangii's hair back and tied it loosely with a towel.

“Hehehe, I'm proud of it.”

You could be a bit more proud about other things. Some examples are your cute appearance, or your bright, quick-to-follow personality.” .....Shoot! What am I thinking? I concentrated on washing Rangii's face.

After finishing washing her, I went out to the living room to find a huge traditional meal set out. I asked Narae something as I thought to myself that there was no way she could've made so many side dishes from the groceries I bought yesterday.

“Did you go grocery shopping this morning?”

“Saehee and I went.”

Narae went grocery shopping! Then the dream-like situation in which Narae got up early, went grocery shopping, and prepared a meal for me happened? Ah, Mom. I think I saved the world in a previous life. Is it okay to be this happy?

“You have completely forgotten that I went as well.”

It's not that I forgot; I was ignoring that on purpose.

“How did you know that?”

“Anyone could tell by the way your jaw dropped while looking at Narae-nim.”

“.....I'm really sorry for that.”

“Don’t have weird thoughts while you’re looking at me!”

“How do I look like someone who’d have those kinds of thoughts?!”

So that Narae would reevaluate her perception of the human known as Kang Sunghoon.....

“Naked apron.”

.....She silenced me.

I sat in the same seat as yesterday; Saehee sat to my left and Narae sat to my right. And Rangii sat on my knee as if it was natural.

“.....Hey.”

“What’s wrong?”

Rangii asked me while pricking up her ears, and while I know it wouldn’t have any meaning, I still had to say something.

“Why’d you sit here?”

“I realized yesterday while I was eating that eating here was the most comfortable, so I decided to eat like this.”

Narae gave a short laugh.

“What, isn’t that okay? Since it’s cute.”

And a confirmed fact.

“But I see this as a nice father-daughter relationship.”

And now she's even digging a grave.

“Oi.”

“I believe the young master will be a good caretaker for children later.”

I don't want to receive those kinds of future-related compliments at 17 years old.

“It must be because he is a helpless lolicon.”

“Stop saying that. If strangers heard that then they'd think I was really a lolicon.”

“Sunghoon, I want to eat that.”

While they were saying that, Rangii had inexplicably taken a bite of rice and, while chewing on that, she pointed at the faraway vegetables. Try and read the mood.

After I was done watching over Rangii's meal, I brushed my teeth and lounged around watching TV. There's a weather forecast on the news saying it'll rain at night in the central district of Seoul. Hm. Is it going to get a little cooler? The heat isn't too bad in the house because the breeze hits here well, but getting cooler is a good thing. Ah..... I want to hang up an air conditioner. However. Is it okay to waste my precious summer vacation just watching TV? .....Well, this is better than going to a prep school, or getting private lessons, or getting supplemental lessons like my friends.

My parents are extremely strict about studying. Seeing them sometimes make me panic, but if you don't have fun when you're young, then when will you?

“Coffee or tea?” [\[2\]](#)

And while I was bewildered by the sudden English as I was a bad student, I quickly regained my composure after realizing that it was elementary school level vocabulary and answered.

“Please give me coffee.”

“Do you like coffee?”

How should I answer Narae’s question? *I don’t love coffee, but I don’t want tea that’s purely bitter. I like coffee since I can have it at least slightly sweet.* Could I say that?

“Y, yeah.”

“Hm—mm. Okay.”

Narae had cat’s eyes and a foreboding smile, and she went into the kitchen. What, was she going to ask me what coffee I wanted *after* making it? The only coffee I know is the one from the vending machines, anyway. That aside, there’s really nothing to watch on TV. All the programs in the morning are the usual stuff, and they’re just boring. I need to pay more attention to the broadcast schedule. Should I go on the computer? No, going on the computer right after eating is a bit..... In the end, I just spaced out in front of the TV. *Sound of epic spacing out*

“Uraaak!”

A clear, beautiful shriek came from somewhere, and as I turned my head, I saw Rangii flying with her body outstretched. Correction. She was flying towards me.

“Uwak?!”

It was too late to catch her, so all I could do was stick out my arms, but she landed face down on the sofa with her chin on my leg as if she was aiming for

this.

“You scared me! What’re you doing?”

“Saehee and Narae are fighting over something weird, so I ran away.”

“They’re fighting?”

I turned my head to look towards the kitchen. Although I couldn’t see them, I could just make out their voices.

“You are foolish. Using the coffee beans one day after they are roasted will result in a taste and aroma that.....”

“That’s wrong. It’s best right after the coffee beans are roasted.....”

.....I’ll pretend I didn’t hear that. Since I can’t understand what they’re saying, and I don’t want to.

“So what is it?”

“You’re too cold sometimes. A woman approaches the man who will become her husband to try to express affection, but you’re acting like that.”

Isn’t it natural for my reaction to you to be as cold as absolute zero? I changed my mind about saying that because she’d just respond with *what do you mean by absolute zero?* I’m not a good enough scholar.

“Yeah, yeah. So, how should I occupy your time?”

“.....I don’t like that tone even more for some reason.”

What a sharp brat.

“But it’s okay. You don’t need to go out of your way to do something for me. Because just being by your body makes me content.”

It looks like lending my leg so she could use it as a pillow doesn’t count as doing something for her.

“But are you sure got up early this morning?”

“Isn’t there the saying, the early tiger gets to the stove first?”

You’re wrong. It may seem correct at first glance, but the saying itself is wrong.

“You’re probably thinking this: gentle cats get on top of the furnace first.” [\[3\]](#)

“.....Have the words changed like that?”

Are you trying to say that it was originally like that?

“Anyways, I don’t sleep well in the morning.”

And she’s lying.

“Today’s the only day you woke up earlier than me.”

“Isn’t there no helping that? When I’m right next to you I get sleepy.”

“Am I a sleeping pill? Ah, by sleeping pill, I mean a medicine that makes you sleepy.”

“Uu—. I know that much.”

Does she not like being treated like a completely clueless child? Rangii flailed her hands and feet, and she shook her body from side to side. Seeing you like this, you’re clearly a child! Rangii used the rebound from her flailing to turn her body

to look up at me. I looked straight at Rangii and spoke.

“So why do you get sleepy when you’re with me?”

“Um.....”

Rangii was deep in thought for a moment, and then,

“It’s probably because when I’m with you, this place gets warm.”

Rangii put her hand against the left part of her chest and spoke.

“When my body, my soul, my everything are touching you, smelling you, feeling you, this spot gets warm. This has been getting bigger, day by day, since the first time I saw you. I don’t really know what this is, but this very warm, tender, and a little sad place..... I don’t really know. What do people call this place?”

She was bearing her genuine self before me with her pure, serious eyes. My face flushed at Rangii’s unexpected surprise attack. Th, this brat. Does she not know what she’s saying right now? Y, you little. That’s.....

While I was having trouble giving her an answer, Rangii’s serious look flew off somewhere and was replaced by a joking expression.

“So that’s what I’ll say.”

Rangii lifted up my t-shirt, buried her face against my belly and put her hand around my waist.

“Hey!”

I couldn’t see her face, but seeing Rangii’s tail shake happily, I could guess what kind of expression she had. Are you smiling, you brat? That also..... must mean you’re happy.

“.....But this is a surprisingly plump, tasty looking belly.”

She’s nonchalantly talking about something I’m conscious of.

“Hey, you brat.”

“Is it okay if I take a bite?”

“Don’t.”

“Just one bite.....”

“I said don’t.”

“Just one.....”

“One bite or not.....”

“Nyam.”

“Uhak?!”

I instinctively grabbed Rangii’s tail after she bit me in the stomach.

“Kya—eeng?!”

“I said don’t bite!”

“T, touching my tail is a foul!”

Are you that alien who transforms whenever you see the full moon?!

“.....Hey, what’re you doing?”

Crap. I regained my senses after I heard Narae's voice that could've reached absolute zero temperatures. Narae glared at me coldly with two cups of coffee in her hands. Um, I'm scared. Please stop looking at me with those eyes.

"Uh, you see, Rangii said she was bored and she played a prank on me so I was playing with her."

"I was tasting Sunghoon's belly. I bit it once, but it tasted incredibly good. Do you want to try a bite too?"

".....Okay. I'll eat later. I'll chew it well."

No, in times like these, please refuse. Maybe she didn't get that angry, but Narae sat opposite of Rangii and offered me a cup of coffee.

"Here."

"Ah, thank you."

I thought to myself *I should regain my usual self while I'm drinking coffee*, and was about to sip it when.....

"What, is it weird?"

"No, not that, but....."

The teacup was familiar, but this is my first time seeing the contents. The color is different. The color is completely different from the coffee I drink. I remember seeing on TV once that this is called brewed coffee.

"Was there this kind of coffee at home?"

There isn't. Definitely not. The only coffee in the house is the box of 100 packets

of instant coffee. Don't say I have cheap taste! If you badmouth coffee mixes, I'll pour hot water with coffee mix down your throat!

"I brought it along with everything else yesterday. I really like coffee."

Did you bring it with that bag? This is the first time that I heard you say that you like this kind of coffee.

Narae savored the aroma of the coffee and took a graceful sip.

.....Seeing her so different from usual made my heart pound. So there are times when I can see Narae like this. Seeing such elegance and class overflowing from Narae, I couldn't help but take up this new challenge and put my mouth to the cup.

Hm.

Bitter! It's bitteer! Super bitter! Coffee is normally bitter, but this is really bitter! This is black coffee!

"Isn't it good?"

If Rangii or Saehee was the one to ask that, I'd say *what the heck's up with your sense of taste?!* But Narae, the one I have a secret crush on, is the one who asked. I did my utmost to control my face and spoke.

"There is no way that kind of coffee could taste good."

I didn't say that. Narae's face changed to her usual expression, and she glared behind her. Saehee was holding two teacups and walked towards us. Hm? Why two?

"I hope you will drink the coffee I made, young master."

Ah, is that vending machine coffee? I feel sorry for Narae, but my sense of taste isn't mature enough to be able to drink herbal medicine-like coffee. I put down the cup Narae gave me on the table for now, took the cup Saehee had and.....

I hallucinated that Saehee sneered and said *you just got caught in my trap!* This is brewed coffee toooooo! The color and smell are even darker! It might even be more bitter! And you want me to drink that?! Even if I have to overcome the coffee Narae gave me through the power of love, yours is totally undrinkableee!!

“Hm? Does it taste good?”

And then, when Rangii had her face against my belly and was making a weird growling noise, she took the cup from my hand before I could tell her not to and,

“Slurp.”

She drank the coffee.

.....And,

“Unyaak?!”

The coffee cup flew into the air. Rangii with all her hair on edge. Narae with her mouth slightly open in surprise. Saehee swiftly catching the cup.

And also,

“Agh it’s hoooooot!!”

In place of Rangii, I drank the coffee with my skin.

What did I do to deserve this?

Due to the unfortunate accident that happened in the morning, I took a shower, and then saw Rangii standing in front of the bathroom, unable to do anything except wriggle her fingers.

I didn't get badly hurt because Saehee quickly got me a wet towel, but maybe Rangii felt bad that I almost got burned because she looked extremely depressed compared to usual.

The tail and ears that she's so proud of were drooped down; she looked just like a dog that was about to get punished by its owner. This is unlike Rangii.

“Um..... are you okay?”

Rangii looked me in the eyes and asked me quietly. With her eyes looking up despite her bowed head, seeing her ask a question like this almost made me laugh. The heck, you brat. Why are you so lovely?

I answered bluntly so that I could see her like this a bit more.

“It hurts.”

“Unyaa?”

Her expression turned a lot darker.

“I, I didn't know it was so hot and bitter. So, so.....”

Wait what? She started by giving childish excuses? If I don't fix this habit of hers right now, then she'll grow up and become an adult that only gives excuses. I stared at Rangii to properly educate her.

“So that's.....”

I gave strength to my eyes with a pow!

“U.....uweeng.”

Ah, I made her cry. .....Was my frown that scary?

I put my hand on top of Rangii’s head as tears formed around her eyes.

“Hu—eh?”

“Rangii. You’re not supposed to give excuses when you make a mistake like this.”

“Th, then what am I supposed to do?”

Saehee, you didn’t even teach her this basic thing? My hearing Saehee say *there was no need to teach her* is probably just a hallucination.

“Apologize.”

“Apologize?”

Rangii tilted her head and copied what I said.

“Just say *I’m sorry* with all your heart and apologize. Because then I’ll forgive you.”

“Then you’ll forgive me?”

Of course not. If an apology was enough to make everyone live happily ever after, then why do we have laws and police? But since she’s still a little kid, I can teach her that when she gets older.

“That’s all you have to do.”

“Okay.”

Rangii nodded her head, clenched her fists as if she was resolving to do something, and took a step back. I was thinking, *is she going to bow?* but I was completely wrong. She kneeled, put her head to the ground and kowtowed!

“I was a hindrance to you, Sunghoon-nim, due to my inability. I will accept any punishment you give, so please punish this lowly wife however you please.”

My jaw dropped and I couldn’t close my mouth. Uh, excuse me? Are you Rangii? Are you a phantom that put on a Rangii mask..... No, she was always a phantom. Hey! What’s wrong? What’re you doing that’s so out of character?

Embarrassed, I saw that Rangii was waiting for me to respond so I ushered Rangii to get back up and spoke.

“Y, you don’t need to apologize so seriously, so stop. Get up. I’ll overlook what happened this time.”

“But didn’t you say I had to apologize with all my heart?”

“But what you did was going too far. Now I’m the one feeling sorry, you know?”

Huh?

Rangii’s eyes suddenly shined after being so depressed. H, hey. Why’re you suddenly acting like this?

“Do you really feel sorry for me?”

“I was missing the subject, object, and the predicate there, but I am sorry. You got down on your knees for something so trivial.”

“Then instead of apologizing to me, could you listen to just one of my requests?”

Stop! You brat! Do you even realize how quickly you've made this about you again? Even if it's natural for children to be selfish, isn't this going too far? She grabbed my hands tightly with her two cute little hands, and seeing her expectant gaze, there was no way I could say no. Ah, Mom and Dad, how were you two able to hit me without a second thought whenever I did that myself? .....What am I asking for? Since I'm not as cute as Rangii, probably. The world is prejudiced against the non-beautiful.

“Okay. But only because I’m not going to listen to a request like this again.”

“Like this?”

Rangii created a question mark. Oi, you mean you weren’t going to ask me to play with you? Are you innocent, or just stupid?

“No, it’s fine. So. What’s your request?”

“A date!”

.....A date? Wait, I remember you talking about that when I was half asleep. What did she say about a date when she was waking me up?

“Eh?”

“A date. Where a man and a woman in love go out.”

You’re holding a candle to the sun, you brat. Did you think I repeated the term because I didn’t know it?

“No. I mean, why a date all of a sudden?”

No, if it’s her, I should be able to think of it.

I asked Rangii one thing.

“The meaning of the word date. Who told you that?”

“Saehee told me this morning..... Shoot!

Rangii covered her slightly open mouth with her hands; you’re already too late. And I went,

“Hmm?”

--While smirking, and Rangii stuck her hands up to the sky and got angry.

“Darn it! What do you care! A date’s a date! Let’s go on a date! Didn’t you say you’d listen to my request?!”

“You shouldn’t take advantage of people’s goodwill like that.”

Because then, you’d be a villain.

“But what does that matter, young master?”

Saehee popped up behind Rangii. She seems a little far away...? It seems like she’s about five steps away from us.

“.....What’re you doing there?”

“I kept some distance to not surprise the cowardly young master.”

“I’m so thankful, I could cry.”

But when Saehee went right behind Rangii in the blink of an eye, that useless consideration for me became worthless. I shouldn’t react to every little thing. I should be used to it by now.

“But what do you mean, that doesn’t matter? Are you telling me that my most memorable first date ever should be with Rangii?”

“Is this your first?”

Why’re you picking this moment to raise the corners of your mouth?

“Pff.”

Don’t laugh!

“That doesn’t matter to you!”

“That is true.”

“This is my first date too!”

“For me as well.”

I don’t want to share such a strange sentiment with phantoms.

“But Saehee. You’re so ol.....”

“That is enough, if you please.”

“Ack, Saehee are you angry?”

“I am not.”

.....That’s right. Talking about your age is taboo.

“Anyway, I want my first date to be with Na.....”

Even I had enough sense to not mention Narae's name.

“.....I mean, wouldn’t it be best to go on one after I’ve prepared?”

“You truly worked hard to use that dimwitted brain of yours.”

I didn’t like the look in Saehee’s eyes as she seemed to be able to see through everything.

“Then instead, how do you feel about playing with Master and coming back later?”

“Explain to me the difference between that and a date.”

“A date is a date, and playing is playing.”

The two words may be similar, but I felt a force of persuasion as great as the Big Bang.

“A date! A daaaate!”

Seeing Rangii dance around me like a native Amazonian, should I just go along with her? No, but for me to go on my first date with Rangii, isn’t that a little sad? Saehee spoke to me while I was worrying about that furiously in my head.

“Young master. I truly hope you will think about Master’s mood.”

Something about Saehee telling me to think..... weighed on my mind. Rangii’s mood. .....yeah.

Rangii is dancing around me like I’m a sacrifice as she prays for a date, and she hasn’t seen the world in centuries. I’d feel bad if I didn’t play with her a bit.

“Okay. Let’s go.”

“Uwa!!”

Her dance turned into a victory dance, and her movements got larger. Thank goodness we're the only residents of the house. If we were in an apartment, we'd have received complaints.

"Now that that's settled, where do you want to go?"

"Are you going somewhere?"

At that moment. I saw Narae, the unwanted house guest whom I have a secret crush on, come into my field of view.

"Na, Narae?"

Seeing Narae walk in from the kitchen where she was cooking or something, with her wearing an apron and smiling while holding a kitchen knife, I inexplicably got goosebumps.

"I came out because I heard something about a D.A.T.E. so what were you talking about without me?"

Could this be my imagination? That the moment when Narae opened her mouth, the kitchen knife looked like it shined.

"F, for whatever reason, you're scary right now."

Did you also have that feeling? Dang, I'm glad. That the feeling I had wasn't wrong.

"We were talking about the date that Master and the young master will be going on."

She kindly explained the situation, but today she was especially nasty. Narae's face froze after she heard Saehee's words, and then she quickly approached me.

And with the kitchen knife in her hand.

“U—nyak?!”

Rangii was shocked and hid behind me with her tail straight out. Oi! Miss Great Phantom! Why's a great phantom scared of a kitchen knife? And you brat! Don't grab onto my clothes! How am I supposed to dodge when I need to?!

“No we weren't! We're just playing, not going on a date!”

“Really!”

Narae stabbed me hard on my chest. .....With her finger.

“Did you think I wouldn't know?”

Huh? Then why did you get angry?

“What're you getting so flustered about when all you're going to do is play? When we did played together all the time when we were kids? You even stayed over at my house once!”

I received a culture shock after I saw Narae get embarrassed and blush after she talked about what happened so long ago.

Sh, she's cute! So cute! Super cute! .....Is what I would have thought if only that shining kitchen knife wasn't there.

“Ah, um. Sorry.”

“Whatever.”

Narae went hmph, ignored me, and spoke to Rangii who was trembling behind me.

“Then Rangii. I can go too, right?”

Rangii nodded her head hard and spoke.

“Yeah, yeah. You can!”

“Thank goodness. Because when you’re playing, the more the merrier.”

But why are you not asking me? Obviously, if Narae was coming with us, my answer would be *yes* and *okay*, but I feel a little disappointed. Could this be a man’s complicated feelings?

“However.”

Narae suddenly turned her gaze towards Saehee.

“You’re not going to go, right? Don’t we need to have at least one person here to watch the house?”

“I am sorry, but I am a phantom. If you so believe that a person must watch over the house, you should stay yourself, Narae-nim.”

“Are you playing with my words?”

“If that is what you heard, then I am sorry, but I was merely telling the truth. Most importantly, as I must attend to Master and the young master, I cannot stay home.”

“Is there a reason for you to attend to them when they’re playing? Use this opportunity to rest at home. After all, you’re so old.”

“But it would seem as though Narae-nim, with such massive lumps of fat attached to her, would be the tired one.”

Ah, I can see them. Cracks appeared in Saehee's expressionless face, and veins popped out of Narae's forehead. I took a step back from within the typhoon and got down to whisper to Rangii.

"Why have those two been acting like this?"

"I, I don't know either. Ever since I got up this morning, they didn't look like they got along that well."

"Our not getting along is a misunderstanding, Master. While we were grocery shopping, we got to know each other very well and are thus getting along this well."

"Yeah, Rangii. We get along. The problem's that we get along so well, we fight."

"He—ek!"

Ah, Rangii. She got scared. What were those two talking about when they were grocery shopping? .....I shouldn't ask. Since I'm not interested in playing marbles with a grenade with its safety-pin pulled out.

"Rangii, want me to read you a book in my room?"

So let's run away.

"Wa—ah. That sounds like fun. Le, let's hurry and go."

I ran away to my room while holding Rangii's hand.

Hm—mm. I feel like we went off the topic because of Narae and Saehee's friendly conversation, but since I'm going to go and play with Rangii, I should

think about what to do a little. Where would be a good place to go with her? There'll probably be a lot of people at the far away amusement park, and it'll take a long time to get on the rides. Is there anywhere with few people where Rangii can have fun?

.....There is.

“Hm? What’s wrong?”

Rangii was on my knees, reading the children’s book *The Little Prince*, when she leaned against my chest and looked up. I stopped reading right during the part when the fox and the prince first meet. It seemed like a good book for a kid like Rangii, no, actually, the truth is that this was the only children’s book in my house so I read it to her, but it seemed like she was really interested in the story.

“Sorry. I was thinking about where to go.”

Rangii’s tail went inside my t-shirt and wrapped around my waist. The feeling of her fur tickles.

“Did you decide? I’ll be happy to anywhere as long as I’m with Sunghoon.”

If Narae had said that, I would’ve been happy enough to say something as insane as “Huhu. Then let’s go to the bed together.” But since Rangii’s the one who said that, I was only happy enough to hug her tightly.

“Uwah, why’d you do that all of a sudden?”

Ah, I really hugged her. I noticed Rangii was both wriggling and staying still in my embrace, and at the same time I thought that Rangii doing something so contradictory looked really cute....., no that’s not it! Yeah! She’s cute! She looks cute! Geez. After only seeing kids on TV with terrible personalities, or kids who’ve only learned weird dances that shouldn’t be performed by children, I think Rangii’s cute since she’s such an innocent kid! Yeah. That’s it!!

“.....Sunghoon?”

“.....No, sorry. My sanity flew away somewhere for a second.”

“What does that mean?”

Do I have to explain even this much?

Even after I finished reading Rangii all of *The Little Prince*, Narae and Saehee were still talking.

“Where the heck do they sell clothes like that? It must be impossible to find something like that, but you sure did well finding it.”

“Please respect that this is my preference. Am I not keeping silent of your vulgar, excuse me, indecent, excuse me, choice in clothing that in a vulgar, indecent fashion emphasizes certain areas?”

“I don’t want to hear that from you! And don’t you know that this kind of clothes is in fashion these days?”

“I believe that, rather than following trends, dressing stylishly as one’s tastes dictate is much wiser.”

“You don’t believe that you’re dressing stylishly, do you?”

.....I should stop them. I’m scared that I’m going to see the kitchen knife dance and a phantom conjuring magic.

“O~i. Excuse~me. You~ two over there~.”

“What?” “Have you called for me?”

Seeing the two of them respond in unison as if they'd decided beforehand to do that, I wasn't sure if they got along or not.

"I decided where we're going to go play, but can I ask you guys to make lunches?"

"Where're we going to go?"

At Narae's question, I spoke the place where I thought of.

"A children's park."

".....That decision is just like you."

Narae spoke as if she was disappointed and looked at me. N, no. What's wrong with a children's park? Didn't we go there all the time when we were kids?

"Want to go somewhere else?"

Narae shook her head.

"It's fine. Then I'm going to make our lunches. Since it's expensive to buy there."

"Want me to help too?"

Narae frowned.

"It's fine. Stupid."

Tch. I wanted to fulfill the ideal image of the two of us as a married couple cooking in the kitchen together, but I'll have to wait until next time. That aside, it'll probably be hard to make lunches for 4 people. Will Saehee help? Thinking that, I glanced at Saehee.

I felt a chill.

A chill went down my spine when I saw Saehee looking out the window with a terrifying smile on her face. That face could make a kid cry. Why're you doing that?

“What’s wrong? Is there something you’re unhappy about?”

Saehee restored her usual expressionless face and spoke.

“Not at all, young master.”

“What do you mean, no?”

“I was thinking about the old saying, tigers hear words in the night and bears hear words in the day.” [\[4\]](#)

.....You’re on the same level as Rangii.

The children’s park. It’s a park made before I was born, and while just a few years ago it was only free for children, now age doesn’t matter so the park is well loved by many people as a rest area.

On weekends, the place would be full of families visiting, but on a weekday afternoon like today, there aren’t a lot of people. The playground toys themselves are old types, but since maintenance wasn’t neglected, safety isn’t an issue, and most of all, this place is a perfect fit for Rangii.

And if we walk along the trail, there’s surprisingly a lot of stuff to see, so that’s why I picked that place for a date.....no, I mean, for a place to play. There’s also the pro that it’s 5 minute walk away from home. So if I were to start by giving the conclusion, I think Rangii likes this place.

“Uwa—.”

Going through the back gate, we saw a fountain cooling down the summer heat. Water rose into the sky from the long, square fountain, and on both sides of it from the forest, pipes released water into the air, creating a beautiful scene. Most importantly, I liked that it was dispelling the heat from the sun that was above us so easily.

“Sunghoon, Sunghoon! It’s a rainbow! There’s a rainbow!”

Rangii grabbed my hand and pointed at the water in the air, chattering incessantly. Rangii’s hand is small, but there was a rainbow hanging there.

“Yeah, yeah.”

Seeing Rangii like this, I unknowingly smiled happily.

“Lolicon.”

“Ugh. Narae?”

Narae went *hmph* and tossed her head back. Narae changed from her skin-exposing clothes to white outerwear, and while holding the lunch with our lunches, she looked like a innocent young lady. No, it’s not that she just looked like one. Her personality aside, she really is a young lady in her household. However, seeing her as an innocent young lady is difficult because of her, uh, eh, her breasts are a little..... She’s clearly wearing an airy one piece dress, but why does it seem like it’s emphasizing your breasts so much?

“That is why men are.....”

“.....Hey, dammit.”

And in comparison, Saehee was inflexibly wearing the same clothes three days ago, two days ago, yesterday, today, and now. The clothes themselves looked like they must be insufferably hot, but even with such stifling-looking clothes on, she wasn't sweating even a drop. A phantom really is a phantom. No, she seems more like a ghost than a phantom.

“Jealousy is one of the seven causes of divorce.”

“Who're you calling jealous?! She's just a little kid!”

“Then are you jealous of me?”

“Why would I be?!”

Narae got angry and argued back at Saehee. Narae is the prettiest when she's smiling, but quite cute when she's angry too.

.....So I should endure the gazes of passersby. Thankfully, Rangii is being quiet right now. Hm? Rangii's quiet? Isn't there no way she would be? Feeling something was strange, I looked to where Rangii was and she was gone. You brat. Where did you go in the moment I was looking away?

“Sunghoon! It's really refreshing here!”

I recall someone explaining it: little kids are like rubber balls that can bounce in unexpected directions. Rangii was standing on top of the railing of the fountain, shouting my name energetically while waving her hands. And next to me, I could hear laughter and people saying *she's so cute, if only I had a little sister, daughter, wife like her.* I couldn't help but blush. It's times like when I see Rangii able to pay no mind to the people around her that I'm honestly jealous of her.

“Hey, that's dangerous, so get down. What if you slip?”

Rangii hopped from the fountain, and enduring my embarrassment, I grabbed

Rangii's waist and was bringing her down when,

“Darn—it!”

Rangii suddenly grabbed my arm and fell backwards like that. And what's behind her is the fountain. The place full of fountain water. What I'm saying is that she fell into the water. Even while I was surprised, I tried to hold her up.

“Huh?”

I don't know where such strength came from that small body, but I wasn't able to keep her up; and while I was held by Rangii, my body tipped towards the fountain. At that moment, I remembered a small trivia about tigers.

When it's hot, tigers cool down their bodies by going into streams or watering holes.

Ah, so that's it. I know it well.

And I'm a human.

Splash!

“Ahahahaha, it feels so nice!”

Rangii laughed happily. She's really laughing happily. She was too happy for me to get angry at her, so all I could do was laugh.

“Yeah. You having fun, you brat?”

“Yeah!”

I grabbed Rangii's waist while she was mistaking the fountain for a swimming pool and..... doggy paddling, and handed her to Narae and Saehee who had

walked towards us.

“But you can’t go into the water here.”

“Why not?”

“Fountains are only supposed to be looked at. You’re not supposed to go in them.”

“Yeah! I get it! I won’t do this next time.”

The first date of my life with Narae and co. started with me falling in a fountain. Just 10 minutes after leaving the house, I have no idea what’s going on.

“Are you okay, Sunghoon?”

“.....Well. This is refreshing.”

Thank goodness the water is clean. Ah, the tap water in this country is truly clean. This makes me want to volunteer for a city ad. I moved the wet hair that was stuck on my forehead back and spoke.

“But still, I think I’m going to have to go back home and change.”

“There is no need to do that.”

That’s because you didn’t fall in the water.

“There is something I can do if we go somewhere with fewer people.”

I’ll believe what Saehee said. Because if she says she has a solution, then she probably really does have one.

I lead all of us to a side road off to the right of the fountain. Now it’s a place

where a decommissioned train is put on showcase, but people unexpectedly don't come here too often. There are still people here, but they were too busy having a good time with their partners of the opposite sex to pay any attention to us. Yuck, disgusting.

"Then please excuse me, Master."

"Yeah."

Saehee carefully slid her hand from Rangii's hair down to her feet. And then shockingly, Rangii went from being soaking wet just a moment ago to looking completely dry like before she went into the water. Instead, a big ball of water had formed on Saehee's hand.

"What's that?"

I asked in place of a surprised Narae.

"It is a simple magic. I gathered all of the water's energy in one place."

Saehee flicked her hand and the ball of water fell and splattered on the ground. ....how interesting.

"Then please excuse me."

Saehee, the phantom dryer, put her hand on my head. In a moment, my wet hair was all dried. Next, Saehee's hand stroked my face, went past my chest and lower,

"....."

.....Narae's stare is extremely scary. I thought about what could've ticked Narae-nim off, but I had no idea.

A bit later, with my clothes as dry as before I fell into the fountain, I forced myself to smile brightly to alleviate Narae's inexplicable bad mood as she looked as if she was reaching the boiling point.

"Okay, so shall we go now? Hahahaha."

"Gross."

Why?!

If you go up a small hill from the fountain, you can see a zoo. Maybe it was because it's hot, but all the animals in their cages were lying down, disappointing all the visitors; but aren't all zoos like this?

"Ack? Isn't that a deer?"

Rangii went right up against the railing around a deer's den and looked amazedly inside, just like any other kids of her visual age. What'll you do if you accidentally trip? I went towards Rangii from behind, and with eyes full of innocence, she said,

"It looks tasty....."

Looking at the deer as if it looked delicious, Rangii was drooling..... Eh? Even as I looked again to see if I was mistaken, drool fell down from Rangii's mouth, and her eyes were shining with gluttony. In comparison, the deer that Rangii was focusing her eyes on was shaking on its four legs, unable to take a single step. Is this the classic scene of a deer paralyzed in fear of a tiger?! The deer couldn't even think of running away at Rangii's overwhelming show of gluttony. Tigers are scary!

".....Hey."

“Sunghoon. Let’s have deer hotpot for dinner today.”

Don’t decide the dinner menu on your own.

“We can’t eat that.”

“What’s wrong? Don’t humans keep animals enclosed there and raise them so they’re easier to eat? If that one won’t do, we can pick another one.”

To think I’d be so glad that there’s no one else around.

“A zoo isn’t a place to pick and eat animals, it’s a place made to go look at them.”

“.....How strange. Why would you only look? Isn’t that wasteful?”

What about this is wasteful? I looked at Saehee, asking her with my eyes to give her a proper explanation. Ah, c’mom. She turned her head away. Are you telling me to explain?

.....I felt like the only way I could explain what a zoo is is with elementary school level vocabulary. I looked towards Narae, asking for help. Seeing me like that, Narae sighed and talked to Rangii.

“These days, you can’t see these kinds of animals in the wild. That’s why we raise these animals in the zoo. So that we can give kids the chance to see the animals they’d seen on TV or in drawings in real life. So you can’t eat that deer, right? If you do, then the kids that come here later won’t be able to see the deer.”

With Narae speaking so logically, Rangii understood Narae’s simple explanation, and she nodded her head. Maybe this is a little unexpected, but Narae was always like this. To some extent, her fierce appearance is just an appearance. Yeah, I like Narae when she’s like this.

.....Although, these days, her image really worsened.

“What, do you have a complaint?”

“Why would I?”

Narae glared sharply at me, but I quickly raised my arms to show I had no desire to resist. After hearing Narae’s explanation, Rangii bit her finger and looked depressed.

“Then there’s no helping it. It’s a shame, but I can only give up.”

Don’t feel so disappointed because of such things.

“But only because I can ask Saehee to find one later.”

And then you’ll be arrested.

I held Rangii’s hand and walked towards the wall made from a log.

“Uwaaaa! What’s that?”

She was acting exactly like a kid who went to the zoo for the first time. I brought Rangii to an elephant moving slowly in its own cage.

Narae answered Rangii’s question.

“It’s an elephant.”

“Is that long thing its nose? Is its nose that long?”

“Yeah. To an elephant, its nose is like our hands. That’s why there’s also this song: Mr. Elephant’s nose is..... hey, why’re you smiling like that?! Why! Is it

weird for me to talk like this?!"

"It is not weird."

It seems like my face relaxed. This scene was just too heartwarming. This felt just like when an older sister looking after her extremely young little sister. Or.....

"I am sure you are not imagining the ideal family in this situation."

".....Sometimes, I wonder if you're a ghost and not a phantom." [\[5\]](#)

"I am indeed a ghost."

"Change the color of your clothes first."

"This is my preference."

Yeah, of course it's your preference. Moving my gaze to look at Rangii, I saw Rangii on the fence, waving her hand at the elephant.

"Elephant! Come over here and play with me!"

After my conversation with Saehee that made me feel like I'd just gone 3 years in a drought, the reservoir of my mind was blessed with rain as this scene brought a natural smile to my face. The adults around us were smiling contentedly while looking at Rangii. But I was the only one to notice something in this heartwarming scene. The elephant that Rangii was shouting the name of. The elephant couldn't even look towards Rangii as it turned away and used all its strength to get away from her. .....could it be?

[-----!!]

I grabbed Rangii by the waist and ran full tilt away from the elephant when it started shrieking, so I could avoid making elephant-eating tiger a new thing.

“Huh, why’re you doing this?”

“I forgot what kind of a brat you are!”

She’s a tiger. On top of that, she’s such a big tiger that it makes the words huge and gigantic seem too small. There’s no way an animal could stay calm when a tiger is staring as if it’s saying “nyam nyam, you look tasty, come over here.”

Thankfully, it was apparent the elephant stopped running away after Rangii went away, because there was no announcement that the elephant escaped from its enclosure.

Having learned my lesson from what happened with the elephant, I took Rangii to the place with lots of small animals, the ‘House of Baby Animal.’ It should be okay here.

“S, so cute! I want to hug and pet them!”

Rangii, who is cuter than anything, was against the glass wall, looking at the meerkats. The two meerkats were standing on two legs and looked around to notice Rangii staring at them..... then they all fell on their backs. I could hear surprised noises around us. And among them was,

“Huh? What’s wrong with that child all of a sudden?”

Rangii was there too. I quietly grabbed Rangii’s hand and walked away while crying on the inside.

“It’s because they’re sleepy. Because they’re sleepy.”

Is it impossible for me to relax at the zoo when I’m with her? .....No, there might be one place.

“Let’s look at the lions.”

I held Rangii's hand and went towards the lion habitat.

My prediction was half right. Seeing Rangii against the glass on the opposite side, the lion got up and snarled.

"Heeh....."

It looks like Rangii was interested by that too.

".....Are you saying you want to fight?"

Wait, wait! Did I just hear something completely unforgivable? What'd she just say?

"Master."

Ah, yeah, Saehee should be able to properly explain.....

"There is no need for Master to personally deal with it; I will personally....."

"Hey, you two!"

At my raised voice, Rangii was surprised and turned towards me, away from her full strength staring contest with the lion.

"But Sunghoon. Look. Isn't it being terribly hostile?"

"That's because you were the one staring at it first."

"I only did that because it's cute!"

"Even if you put it like that, you're not persuading me at all."

Who would call a lion cute? Normally people say things like *it's cool*, *it's handsome*, or *it's so regal*. People would call you cute after seeing you..... Why am I acting like this?

I grabbed Rangii by the back of her neck while she was trying to start a fight with the lion and moved her away. And there was one of Rangii's clansmen, a tiger. As soon as the tiger saw Rangii,

Roooar!!

The tiger howled. Heeh, do tigers recognize other tigers? Having received a greeting from one of her species, Rangii said,

“What’s this kid saying?”

She tilted her head and asked me.

“Hey. Why’re you asking what that tiger said?”

“But I cannot understand him.”

“How does that.....”

As I was reacting to Rangii’s words, I suddenly noticed something. I saw the information sign next off to the side. And among the things I saw were the words ‘Bengal tiger.’

Oi, wait a second.

“Where were you born?”

“I was born in Mount Baekdu.”

Is there such thing as a foreign language among tigers? .....I should stop thinking

about that. It is what it is.

“You’re clearly a foreigner. I am going to.....”

Anyway, I concluded that I can’t keep Rangii here any longer.

“Let’s go over there.”

“Huh? Why are you acting like that?”

That’s because I’m afraid something terrible will happen if you stay in the zoo.

“So we can go somewhere else.”

“Ack! Then I want to go see that over there!”

Rangii pointed at the place where it said Aquatic Birds Area in large letters.

Give it up. I don’t want to experience a horror film directly.

“Let, let’s go next time.”

It was an unoriginal excuse, but thankfully she went along with what I said. She chewed on a finger of her hand that I wasn’t holding, and she looked disappointed.

Farther down the road of the zoo was a manmade stream. The stream looked like something from the countryside, with water circulating because of a machine, and while the kids were enjoying playing in the water, the parents were reminiscing about old times. And like a little kid, she went towards the water with her shoes on and.....

“Oh man.”

I put my arms between her armpits and held her up. Rangii struggled in my

embrace.

“What’s wrong?”

I know that Saehee can just use her magic to dry her shoes if they get wet. But we can’t depend on her magic forever. Rangii has to live in the human world.

“You brat. You have your shoes on.”

“So I have to take them off?”

“No, since you can get hurt with them off, for today, just put your feet in the water.”

“There is no need to do such a thing.”

Saehee cut in next to me. While I was thinking to myself, *you’re not going to say it’s okay because you have magic, right?* Saehee took something out of her sleeve.

.....They were white slippers. And they looked like they’d fit Rangii perfectly.

“Because you can wear these.”

I put Rangii down and asked Saehee something while she was changing Rangii’s shoes.

“When did you bring those?”

“Just now.”

Do you have a 4D Pocket in your clothes?

“Is it fine now?”

I nodded to Rangii after she was all ready. Finally ready, Rangii started to play happily within the crowd of passengers..... kids her age. Even with kids like her, Rangii's cuteness was easily noticeable.

"Let's sit and rest over there."

"Yeah."

We left Saehee to care for Rangii, and Narae and I sat on the bench behind the stream. Whew—. Now I can relax.

"How about exercising more often? How can you be tired already?"

I felt embarrassed by Narae's scolding.

"Looking after kids is hard work."

"Despite that you're actually good at this?"

"My little cousins were really mean when they were young."

Narae met them a few times back in middle school. Maybe she remembered because Narae tilted her head.

"Were they? But I thought they were nice kids?"

That's because they act nice in front of strangers.

I suffered so badly that they made me want to have boys when I get married later."

"What's up with that."

Narae chuckled. Even though what I said wasn't a laughing matter to me at all.

"I like sons, but daughters are good too. Aren't they cute?"

"Then one son and one daughter would be best."

"How about two sons and one daughter?"

"My apologies for interrupting during your family planning."

Heeek?! I thought my heart was about to pop out of my chest when Saehee appeared behind me and stuck her head between the two of us. But what did she say? Family planning? Narae gave a vehement denial at Saehee's words.

"Wh, who's doing family planning? That wasn't it!"

"But you were speaking extremely in detail."

Narae's face reddened.

"Doesn't everybody think about it at least this much?!"

Sorry, Narae. Most high schoolers don't think about family planning. So I changed the subject.

"But what're you doing here?"

"I thought it would be best to eat lunch soon, and I came to say something."

Really? I looked at my watch and saw it was already 12. I'm not hungry, but it wouldn't be a bad idea to eat now. Since we're going to go to the amusement park in the afternoon.

"That seems good. Could you get..... No, I'll go."

I didn't think Saehee would tell Rangii to come over here when she's having so much fun, so I decided to get her directly. Geez, seeing you play with all the other kids who look your age makes you seem like you seem like a totally carefree kid, even though you are one.

“Rangii.”

It's probably a hallucination, but I saw Rangii's ears prick upwards. Although that didn't actually happen.

“Did you come to play with me?”

If I play among all of you, the thoughts of the people watching will change from [ah, how nice.] to [who the hell is this guy].

“No. Let's go eat lunch.”

“Ohh..... It's too bad, but let's play again later.”

“Yeah!”

“Bye, Rangii~!”

When did you get so close to them? And with the boys. Something didn't feel right. I left the stream while mindfully holding onto Rangii's hand.

In the time I was gone, I think Saehee got a spot under a pavilion. Narae and Saehee prepared sandwiches for lunch. So you two are belong to the picnic-sandwich-crowd? I'm part of the gimbap crowd, myself.

“Shut up. Just eat.”

Narae abruptly handed me a container full of sandwiches. I took one out and

took a bite. ....Heeh. It's good.

“How is it?”

She must have felt self-conscious, because even though she told me to eat it regardless of taste, she asked me that question. I gave Narae a thumbs up.

“Yeah. It's good.”

“Then that's fine. I'll make gimbap next time, so just eat that.”

Speaking like that, Narae took a sandwich and bit into it. It must be my imagination. But it seems like Narae blushed a little.

“Me too, me too!!”

“What do you think is in your hand?”

After I spoke to Rangii who was sticking next to me with her own sandwich in her hand,

“The ingredients of the sandwiches are different.”

“The one Rangii's holding has cheese, ham, and lean beef. Yours is made of tomato and lettuce.”

“I want to try just one bite too!”

Three people replied. But why is mine only vegetables? Even though I don't care, since it tastes good. I gave the sandwich I was eating to Rangii.

“Here.”

“Nyam.”

Rangii opened her small mouth and took a bite. Chew chew. A moment later, “?”

Her hair formed a question mark and she asked a question.

“Why does Sunghoon’s sandwich only taste like grass?”

Hey hey, how can you say that it tastes like grass?

“It is because the young master is an omnivore.”

“I am an omnivore. And come to think of it, why does mine have no meat?”

“We made ours like that because we kept eating so much meat since yesterday. What, do you have a complaint?”

“Not at all, Narae-nim. No, thank you very much. The truth is that I wanted to eat vegetables.”

With our stomachs cooling down, we decided to take a walk along the path in the park. While watching Rangii copy the many old men and women who were power walking, looking at the totem poles, and watching men play basketball, we ended up at the entrance to the amusement park before we even realized it.

“What do you do in this place?”

With Rangii looking at me, enraptured and her eyes shining, I decided to quote the old saying that one picture is worth a thousand words.

“You’ll find out after you play.”

“Hmmm?”

She seems too short to be able to go on every ride..... Ah. That looks good. I pointed towards the bumper cars that were off to the side and spoke,

“Let’s go on that.”

And then I was painfully reminded of the way people act like completely differently behind the steering wheel.

“U—nyak?!”

“Uwak!”

Narae crashed in between Rangii and my bumper cars. If I hadn’t put my seatbelt on, I would’ve been sent flying out by the impact. Wait. Were bumper cars always this powerful and dangerous? But I don’t think they were?

“I’m going one more time!”

At Narae’s declaration of war, I desperately turned the steering wheel to drive away, but hey! Were bumper cars always able to make such precise movements?

Narae dodged all the clueless drivers rushing towards her and smashed into the back of my bumper car with a bang!!

“Unyaaak!”

I saw Rangii off to my side, her eyes rolling in their sockets.

“Wh, why are you doing that to me?”

“That wasn’t me!”

“You’ll get hurt if you stay there, you know?!”

““Narae!””

I didn't know 5 minutes was this long. During those 5 minutes of the session, I pedaled hard and moved the steering wheel to avoid Narae. But, as if she was a master of bumper cars, Narae didn't miss my back, and I could only feel jealous of Saehee who was watching from outside.

After 5 minutes that felt like 50, Rangii and I sat on a bench, and looked up at the yellow sky.

“.....So she was always that kind of kid.”

“.....I think she's been holding in a lot because of all that happened.”

Unlike Rangii and me who were exhausted, Narae stretched, emphasizing a certain part of her body, and spoke happily.

“Ah~. I really released all my stress in one fell swoop. It's best to do this when you've held in a lot.”

I think I'm going to have to change my impression of Narae. She isn't fierce-looking-but-actually-kind, but rather fierce and kind.

“What do you want to ride next?”

Do you not even get tired? No, am I the weird one for almost getting knocked out after going on the bumper cars? Rangii, who'd gone through the same trial as me, seems to have been revived to full health after drinking the water Saehee brought her. In the end, I was dragged along by Narae and Rangii.

If I start with the conclusion, one hour later. I became a corpse. My body was exhausted by the terrifying roller coasters that Narae went on, and my mind was KO'd by the merry-go-round-like rides Rangii went on.

I looked up at the sky while sitting on a bench and drinking the water Narae gave

me. Ah, the sky is really clear. Is it okay for the sky to be so clear when it was supposed to rain in the evening? Instead, I'd like it if it started raining now. So we can go home.

“Are you tired?”

Rangii spoke to me while pulling on my hand.

“.....Can’t you tell by looking at me?”

“Then you can pick the next one.”

In times like this, would it be okay to say something like *then how about we go home now, or let’s rest a bit?*

“Yeah. We kept taking you everywhere so you choose one too.”

Even Narae was supporting Rangii’s words. Enemies on all sides! Am I surrounded by enemies?! Who here is my ally?!

“.....”

Fine. What was I thinking, hoping anything from you? I ignored Saehee’s stare and looked around. Where’s somewhere I can rest a little..... I found something good.

And that’s called the haunted house.

“Let’s go there.”

I’m saying this ahead of time, but I don’t have some wicked scheme at all. I’m saying that I’m not looking forward to Narae getting scared and sticking close to me.

“.....Pervert.”

“You are showing your true intentions too easily, young master.”

Don’t look at me like that. That wasn’t my intention; I picked that place because it’s where we could comfortably have the most fun.

“Huh? Why’re you all like that?”

Only the innocent Rangii understood my feelings. No, it’s probably just because she doesn’t know what a haunted house is. I gave a rough explanation of what a haunted house is, and we walked towards the place that would become my sanctuary for a bit.

.....But even so, I didn’t want to go in with Rangii. The passages in the haunted house are narrow so only one group of two are allowed to go though. Our group has four people. So we were deciding the pairs, but Rangii threw a tantrum, saying “I’m only going with Sunghoon!” so we divided into Rangii and me, and Saehee and Narae. I definitely wasn’t thinking of using the chaos to increase my skinship with Narae, but..... I’m sorry. I was looking forward to that a little.

But why with Rangii of all people?

“What’s wrong? Is it because you’re scared? Don’t worry! I’ll protect you!”

Seeing Rangii a hundred times more energetic than usual, I unconsciously felt more energetic too. Rangii looked really cute when she clenched her fists and looked at me with determination, trying to get me to get up. Yeah. She’s definitely cute.

But the thing is, though you may have noticed from my decision to go relax at a haunted house, I had never been scared of ghosts in my life. Thinking about it now, that may have been because I saw Rangii, a huge tiger way scarier than ghosts, when I was younger.

I held the hand of Rangii who's scarier than ghosts and cuter than dolls, and went into the haunted house. First was a flight of stairs going underground. The entrance was covered in a blackout curtain, and there were red lights that made the whole place feel spooky. Maybe it was designed with a cave-like motif because the rocks decorated the walls, making them rough.

I walked and heard the screams of the people who entered before us being transmitted through speakers and thought, *those sounds really fit this place*, but then I felt something was weird. My body is trembling. More specifically, my left hand that Rangii is holding is shaking. Looking at Rangii, I saw her face had gone blue and she was trembling while holding my hand tightly with both of hers.

There wasn't a trace of her authority as a great phantom, nor the confidence with which she said she'd protect me.

“.....Hey.”

“Ee—heek?!”

All I did was say your name, so why'd you get so surprised?

“D, don't talk so suddenly! You surprised me!”

For some reason. I thought I saw tears brimming in her eyes. For Rangii's sake, I silently walked forward.

“S, say something. Are, are, aren't you scared?”

.....What're you asking me to do? I was about to talk to her. when I heard a click and a ghostly doll hung from the ceiling by its neck. The blood dripping from its mouth and its envious eyes really matched it well. Anyone else would've been easily scared.

“Unyaak!!”

It was then, when Rangii jumped up and threw a right jab! The doll swung back after getting hit by Rangii due to the principle of action, and by the principle of reaction, the doll went straight back at Rangii again. Well, isn’t this basically Foucault’s pendulum?

“Hunyaaaaak!”

She was spooked a second time by the doll. Rangii jumped up, got on my back, and wrapped her arms around me, burying her head into my shoulder. I may die from asphyxiation.

“Hey! M, my neck!”

“Kyaak!”

M-my breath! I loosened Rangii’s grip a little to survive. Whew, I almost died. Now I could talk to Rangii while she’s trembling on my back.

“If you’re scared, we can go back.”

“W, we can?!”

“Yeah.”

Then should I turn back? But instead of saying to go back, Rangii thought for a moment and said,

“N, no. I’ll go to the end.”

She said something completely unexpected.

“You aren’t scared?”

“I, I’m not scared!”

Even though you’re saying that while you’re on my back in fright.

“It, it just surprised me!”

That means you’re scared.

While obviously bluffing, she got down from my back and hugged herself tightly to my left leg.

Hey.

“I can’t walk if you do that.”

“Uuk.”

I’m glad that Rangii felt satisfied with holding my hand like before. Even though we could go back if you’re scared. I held on tight to Rangii’s hand and walked forward once again.

In the cave were weird things like skulls and coffins. Crosses and the like acted as decorations, shining as they hovered slightly to scare visitors; they faithfully filled their role, and they were enough to scare Rangii. Seeing Rangii step forward even as she trembled made me feel bad for her. You brat, you look like you’re about to cry.

The moral of today: don’t bring timid kids to haunted houses.

There’s no helping it.

“Wait.”

“Hu, hunyang?”

I held Rangii up by her waist and brought her to my chest. Rangii instinctively locked her legs around my waist and wrapped her arms around my neck. I spoke while holding Rangii up by her rear with one hand, and rubbing her back with the other.

“You aren’t scared now, right? Keep your eyes closed tight. We’ll be out soon.”

Rangii looked up at me with tears in her eyes.

“B, but then, won’t you have no fun? I’m okay. I can keep going.”

Ah—. So that was the reason?

I was the one who said to go here. Did you think I wanted to go here because I’d enjoy it? I don’t know why she’s thinking so hard about others when she’s a little kid. Since she’s been trembling in fear until now.

“It’s okay.”

Because seeing you laughing is a hundred, a thousand times better than seeing these gorey things. .....Of course, Narae’s smile is a thousand, ten thousand times more. Wait, from whom am I trying to defend Narae?

“O, okay.”

Rangii closed her eyes and buried her face in my shoulder. Rubbing Rangii’s back while she was like that, I quickly walked to get through the haunted house.

I was blinded by the warm sunlight when we went outdoors. Okay, now...

“Rangii. We’re out now..... oi.”

“Snore—. Snore—.”

Are you sleeping? Are you sleeping right now?! Does falling asleep in that situation make any sense?! You said you were scared! How does it makes sense for you to fall asleep in such a short time when you were trembling in fear!!

No matter how much I ridicule her, it won't change the fact that Rangii's sleeping. I sighed and sat down at a nearby bench under a tree. Even though Rangii's a kid, she's heavy. And..... it's hot. Even under the shade, hugging the superheater known as Rangii is making me sweat profusely. Let's go home when Saehee and Narae come out.

Even while thinking that, a sudden refreshing breeze made me fall asleep in an instant.

.....It's not my fault. It's because last night I didn't sleep well, and because Narae and Rangii dragged me along. That's why.

I was a little surprised when I woke up. First: Because I was lying down on top of a mat. Second: Rangii was using my arm as a pillow. And third:

“.....”

“.....”

I turned my head slightly and saw Saehee staring down at me.

“.....What're you doing?”

“I was observing.”

“.....Really?”

Also, I fell asleep on the bench, so how is there a mat under me?

“For the sake of Master’s and your sound slumber, I moved you two.”

“How?”

“With magic.”

That magic you’re talking about is really amazing. But..... I didn’t ask about it, but what’s that soft feeling on the back of my head and back? And I feel like someone’s hand is on my waist.....

“?!?!”

Clearly, the owner of that arm must be Narae. Then that soft, pillow-y, cushion-like feeling on my back is?!

While I was speechless, unable to do anything but smile, Saehee kindly explained the situation.

“She had watched the young master, who sleeps like a cow, and fell asleep just the same.”

R, really?!

“And the young master is currently laying on my lap.”

Seriously?! That’s why your face was so close?

.....Since I’m lying on Saehee’s lap, and I’m able to look at Saehee’s face with no obstruction in between, then...

“Do you have something to say?”

“.....No.”

I stopped thinking.

Narae and Rangii got up an hour later.

“Why are you like that if you like it?”

I have nothing to say.

“Ah—. That was fun.”

My sorta-kind'a date with Narae, Rangii, and Saehee ended at sunset. Rangii was smiling widely, maybe because she played so much, and Narae looked refreshed unlike before. .....Well, after she nearly killed me when we were at the bumper cars, seeing her smile like that is healing my heart. And Saehee? Saehee's behind Rangii with her usual expressionless face. Can no one except Rangii tell if she had a good time or not?

“Now, want to go home?”

“Yeah! When we’re home, I want to bathe, eat, and sleep with you!”

Seeing her like that, I almost said “yeah, that sounds good.” Looking like she wouldn’t lose to anyone in terms of happiness, she was adorably showing her teeth while smiling widely. But I don’t plan on going along with her just because of that.

“I don’t know about the first two, but switch that last one with Saehee.”

“Eh—. Why’re you being like that? I like Saehee too, but I like you more!”

With good timing, Narae interrupted our conversation.

“Don’t carelessly say stuff like that.”

“Why not?”

“Sunghoon might attack you since he’s a lolicon.”

“I’ve been curious since before, but what do you mean by attack?”

Rangii asked innocently. Narae hesitated as even she couldn’t answer that. Well, Saehee is probably the only one who could answer. I looked at Saehee to stop her from saying anything weird. And I wasn’t able to believe what I saw. Saehee was grimacing.

“.....Oi?”

I spoke to her since I was worried, but Saehee ignored me, looked at Rangii, and spoke.

“They have come. They are earlier than expected.”

I don’t know what she’s saying, but seeing Rangii, who’d been giving Narae a hard time, have a serious look on her face, nothing good seem to have happened.

“Really?”

“Yes.”

Rangii and Saehee were having a conversation only they understood.

“What the heck’s wro.....”

My words were cut off. At that moment, something unidentifiable to a normal human like me covered my whole body. .....What is this?

“Sunghoon.”

Narae’s face had turned blue, and she was trembling as she held onto my arm. Her legs are shaking. Even at a glance, it’s clear that something’s wrong. If I don’t do anything...!

“Saehee! What is this?!”

“It is a barrier. One that attacks people and disrupts their awareness.”

“But what is that?”

“This is the action of the enemy that I told you before.”

“Enemy? By enemy, you must mean..... The Bear Tribe?”

“You’re definitely a changgwi. Being able to identify this so quickly, you’re living up to your name.”

On a deserted street, I saw a woman appear from thin air. It was like an invisible person suddenly became visible in front of me.

Wearing glasses and giving off the sense of great intelligence, a woman who looked to be in her 20s with something that was attracting my eyes to nowhere else but her..... Her breasts were big. No, I’m not talking about where a teenage boy is looking first, I’m saying that her breasts were that prominent! Enough to make my eyes go nowhere else! Although she was wearing a suit, the top of her button down shirt was unbuttoned so a bit of her bra was showing, and I’m paying way too much attention to that! The Bear Tribe really does have large breasts! No, this isn’t the time to be admiring.

“How dare you run that filthy mouth!”



Rangii stood in front of me and shouted.

“I clearly warned you while you were running away! Can you not remember me telling you that, If you troubled me again, I could not guarantee your life?!”

The woman from the Bear Clan, now shortened to bear woman, bowed deeply to

Rangii.

“I apologize for my extremely late greeting due to your changgwí’s barrier, tiger-nim. I am Jeongmi, the head of this generation of bears. And while I remember clearly your roar at the seal, despite my regret, members of the Bear Tribe, we had no choice but to find you even after we were driven away.”

“I don’t care about your circumstances!”

The head, Jeongmi, scowled.

“We truly have no interest in the circumstances between you and Ungnyeo-nim. However, this cursed blood will not disappear.”

Rangii clicked her tongue.

“Then tell that damn woman this. I haven’t the slightest hint of affection for either you or him! The man who will become my husband is Sunghoon; this man is the only one for me!”

“I am sorry, but she is not someone to listen to a joke.”

“How dare you! What do you believe when you’re flapping your lips?! I will forgive you just this once in consideration of Sunghoon being with me, but turn back now! I do not wish to taint my hands with blood on such a happy day as today!”

“I am sorry, tiger-nim. We have no choice in the matter. If we were to miss this chance after 300 years.....”

Tears fell in a line from one of Jeongmi’s eyes.

“We would be unable to escape this cursed blood.”

The second Rangii's body shook,

“Attack!”

Jeongmi ran towards Rangii. At that moment, I saw something insane. Even though the street was completely deserted just before, dozens, no, hundreds of women appeared from out of nowhere with all kinds of weapons and ran towards us. This is an extremely detailed illusion. They all had large breasts, and eyes devoid of any consciousness. I felt an instinctual revulsion and fear when I saw their expressionless faces, ones even more terrifying than Saehee's. Um, this is a dream, right?

“It seems you have prepared quite a lot.”

“The fools cannot tell the difference between a puppy and a tiger.”

Only Rangii and Saehee understood this illusion to be reality and moved. I was frozen, unable to do anything, and Narae was trembling while holding on to me.

“.....Saehee.”

“Yes, Master.”

“Spare their lives. They are undeserving.”

“.....Understood.”

Rangii moved her hand. She swung the gigantic tiger's front paw that had taken the place of her hand. An unbelievable sight unfolded as she broke the laws of the conservation of mass as compared to her body proportions. There's no way something like that is possible. But aren't they phantoms because they can do these impossible things? The bear women who were unable to dodge Rangii's paw were swept away as if they were baseballs hit by a baseball bat, defying gravity as they hit the wall, the tree, the ground.

.....Did they die? They didn't. Even while they were throwing up blood, with their arms twisted in bizarre positions, or even their legs were broken, they got back up again. Maybe they didn't feel pain because faces didn't change at all. They just set their broken bones, spit blood, and rushed at Rangii just like before, their eyes completely vacant.

“You, if only you were gone, none of us would have to go through this!”

Jeongmi was striking down with a huge bat, no, a **bone-shaped club** that was bigger than she was tall. Even in this situation, something about seeing a woman like Jeongmi wield such a fantastical club almost made my mind go blank. Rangii raised her hand to block it, but she felt something and immediately dodged. The club pulverized the road.

“So that's Ungnyeo's bone.”

“I brought this especially to combat the tiger-nim. Even if you are the tiger-nim, if this touches you while you are in your spiritual body, you will receive a terrible wound.”

“Tch. How tiresome.”

“You should speak again after you see what you have caused to these children.”

Jeongmi spoke while pointing at the other bear women. Even though they were getting hit by Saehee, having their joints snapped, throwing up blood, and getting so damaged that they collapsed, they kept getting up and attacking with blood flowing down. Is this some kind of horror movie?

“Are you saying that what's happening to these kids is my fault? None of you have changed at all in the last 300 years! Didn't what I say get through to you? I just want to live my life!”

“That is a curse to us. Because just your staying alive means we will be used like dolls! Me as well! And my little sister! And everyone!”

.....What the hell is she saying?

“As this is unrelated to you two, please leave for now. Although these numbers are nothing to Master and me, but there is such thing as a worst case scenario. If you were to leave the barrier, you would be safe in the eyes of the public.”

Despite having just been beating up bear women, Saehee was suddenly next to me. There were still lots of bear women, it didn’t seem like they planned to approach us carelessly.

“I will lead you outside of the barrier. When there, please avoid places with many people. I will find you when this disturbance has been dealt with.”

Saehee was being rational. This isn’t something a human like me could do anything about. This is a fight between phantoms and those that are close to phantoms. Narae and I would just be burdens if we stayed here. However..... I already knew. No, I just realized.

“Can I stay here?”

“Sunghoon?”

Narae squeezed my arm that she was holding. I know what you want to say. But I told Rangii back then. That no matter what happened, I would protect her. How could I just run away at the first chance I got? Since this all **happened because of me.**

I realized that this all happened because I brought Rangii with me to Seoul without thinking. The instigator of all this is me. .....However, Rangii. How can this be a small problem? I’m asking what you consider to be a big problem!

Saehee looked at me and smiled. To be able to smile while she's surrounded by enemies, she's definitely not human.

"It seems you have now begun to use your head. But you are still foolish. While the young master is here, Master cannot use her full strength."

And as if she read my mind, she said,

"Protecting Master does not solely encompass her body. Thus, please leave."

She made it so the only thing I could do was leave. There's no way I can respond if you put it like that. I nodded my head.

"Then I shall open a path. I hope you do not fall behind, young master."

While Saehee was moving, more than a dozen bear women charged at us from all directions. And Saehee..... oi, you're joking, right?

Saehee's clothes, without a doubt, split in half from front to back and began to move on its own. But she wasn't in her underwear or naked despite that. Saehee was still fully clothed. That is, she was wearing two sets of clothes. For her to have clothes on under her clothes in such hot weather. I couldn't even imagine.

"This is a simple magic. I can keep them occupied for now, so let us go now."

"Are you actually super powerful?"

I followed behind Saehee while holding up Narae as she wasn't able to walk properly.

"Because I am Master's attendant."

".....Then how strong is Rangii?"

Saehee answered while throwing the bear women who'd dodged her clothes aside with one hand.

"If you exclude Ungnyeo, no one could stand up to Master."

Saehee was talking while repelling two bear women that attacked her from both sides with just a swing of her arms.

"The only reason I hold back from killing is because of Master's kindness. The same goes for these weaklings"

.....It seems I shouldn't hit Rangii on the head anymore.

After throwing the bear women like that and guiding us, Saehee suddenly stopped. I stopped with her, with Narae on my shoulders.

".....Why?"

"We have arrived."

Eh? What do you mean? Nothing's changed..... No, something's changed. The weird energy that was covering me had inexplicably disappeared. Does that mean we're outside the barrier? But I can still see Rangii and the bear women far away.

"That is because you witnessed what is happening while within the barrier. I do not have the time to explain in detail, but please avoid places with many people. Such an event will not occur, but Master will be worried."

"Y, yeah."

Narae nodded and pulled on my arm. She looks better than before, so it looks like she's feeling better.

“Sunghoon, let’s hurry and go. My head’s been strangely hurting since earlier.”

Even so, she clearly looks worse than normal. Of course, she wouldn’t feel good after seeing her fellow Bear Clan behave so inhumanly. No, I also don’t want to see something like that.

“Yeah. Saehee, take care of Rangii.”

“Yes.”

Saehee bowed slightly, and when I blinked my eyes, she was suddenly within the barrier, fighting the bear women. This isn’t the time to be relax and watch. Even if we’re outside the barrier, we’re in the same danger. I held Narae’s hand and ran to leave this place.

It was then. Jeongmi, the head of the Bear Clan, shouted.

“I command you as the head! Awaken the blood of the Bear Clan, Seo Narae, and kill that man!”

I heard a strange sound from behind me. What’s with that sudden nonsense? You’re telling Narae to kill me? I grabbed Narae’s hand and tried to run away. ....That was a mistake.

“Narae?”

Narae held me still with what felt like inhuman strength. I naturally looked behind me when I was stopped, and I saw Narae with an emotionless face, vacant eyes, and clenching a fist. And as I was unable to dodge such a fast punch, I got hit.....

“No!”

The instant her fist was about to make contact with my head, Narae was sent

flying. I'm not kidding, she was sent up as high as my height. She looked like she was hit by a truck. Seeing Narae broken, seeing her collide into the tree, this all felt unbelievable. But Narae's clothes was turning red.

Rangii stood where Narae used to be.

"Are you o....."

"Narae!!"

I slapped aside Rangii's upraised hand and ran to Narae. She wasn't moving, but I put my hand over her nose. Thank God. She's breathing. She didn't die. Along with my sense of relief, a great rage surged up within me at Rangii. You damn brat, what the hell did you do?!

"Go away! It's dangerous!"

Rangii grabbed my body with her human arm that was covered in white fur. The strength was monstrous, but I strangely didn't feel it. Since she's a phantom. But Narae! What about Narae!!

"Let go! What're you saying is dangerous! You're the dangerous one, idiot! What'll you do if Narae dies!"

"I held back! Now that she has awakened her Bear Clan blood, she won't die from just this! Right now you're in more danger than Narae! I just realized! I'm not their target; you are!"

"What's that nonsense? Is that important? Narae just got hurt! She might die!"

"Didn't I say she wouldn't die? Calm down! Even I can....."

"What do you mean she won't die! Hey, you little crap! Does it look like I can calm down? I'm asking if it looks like I can calm down when Narae is throwing up

blood and unconscious after she got hit by a phantom!!”

The moment Rangii’s grip loosened, I shook her off and ran to hug Narae. I heard that it’s not good to shake someone when they’re like this.

“Narae! Narae! Are you okay? Narae!!”

I shouted Narae’s name at the top of my lungs.

“Uu..... Sung..... hoon?”

Thank God. Narae’s conscious. I’m about to cry.

“Run..... away. My body..... m, moving on..... it’s own.”

“Narae? It’s okay. I’ll take you to the hospital so.....”

Before I could even finish that sentence, Narae’s eyes went blank for the second time and she grabbed my neck. Why? Why is Narae doing this? Narae didn’t answer. And the when she was about to strengthen her grip..... Rangii grabbed Narae’s hand. No, she broke it. Narae’s arm was bent where it shouldn’t have been, and her arm was dangling in accordance to gravity. I couldn’t even scream after seeing that grotesque scene.

“Didn’t I tell you?! Narae’s dangerous right now!”

But Rangii was different. She pushed Narae away from my chest, and Narae collapsed onto the ground again.

.....What just happened? She can’t get up. She’s not moving, just as if she died. She twitched on the ground, throwing up blood.

“But the Bear Clan’s control is still weak so if you take her away.....”

“What the hell have you done!”

I shoved Rangii away.

“.....Huh?”

Rangii sat on the ground, her eyes empty

I don't care. Right now, Narae comes first. I went up to Narae and put my hand over her nose. Thank God. She's breathing. But the blood on her mouth, her pale face, her broken arm. She's clearly in danger. I need to hurry and take her to a hospital.

Right then, Rangii was unexpectedly near me and spoke.

“Wha, what's wrong?! This was all for your sake; there was no helping it! I also hate doing this! But why are you getting mad at me?! Did I do anything wrong?!”

I responded to Rangii's childish tantrum by saying,

“Did you do anything wrong? Are you kidding? Do you really not know what you've done wrong?”

Saehee suddenly appeared and was standing in front of Rangii. How did you..... I saw the collapsed forms of the Bear Clan behind Saehee. Ah, so that's it. You're an impossible strong phantom as well.

“Master made the correct decision.”

“The correct decision? To send a girl flying and break her arm?”

“B, but if I didn't you would have been in dang.....”

“You didn't have to do that! Aren't you two strong? Aren't you a great

phantom? You're the tiger from the myth!"

Among all the Bear Clan members who targeted Rangii, not a single one of them was properly on their feet. The head that looked like she had something was leaning on her club, breathing heavily. If you guys are that strong,

"Is this all you can do? Was this the only solution?"

"Th, there was no helping it! If I was even a little late, you would have died!"

"Then you! So if I was like Narae and was a threat to Saehee, you would try to kill me?!"

"Th, that's not it. There's no way I could do that to you, Sunghoon!"

"I'm saying that Narae is that kind of person to me! But, but what did you say? You were thankful?"

Rangii looked unusually confused. She opened and closed her mouth, clenched and unclenched her fist, and spoke after working hard to figure out what to say.

"I, I just..... For your sake, I didn't want you to die because of Narae; I didn't want you to get hurt so....."

But, when she said that,

"Because of Narae?"

I lost my sanity.

"Don't screw with me! My almost dying, that's your fault! It's your fault!"

By the time my sanity returned, it was too late.

Suddenly, the great phantom who had overwhelmed the Bear Clan was replaced by a girl who looked like she got hurt after getting rejected by the guy she liked.

“.....Ah.”

I feel like I have to say something, but nothing came out of my mouth.

“.....You’re right.”

Rangii clenched her fists.

“Everything is..... my fault.”

Her huge amber pupils were shaking. Blood spilled from Rangii’s hands even though the hundreds of Bear Clan members had been unable to harm her.

“Resent me. You have the right to do so.”

“Master. However.....”

“Enough! It is not your place to speak.”

“.....Yes.”

Unlike her usual self, Rangii smiled sadly.

“I understand. Ha..... After this, I now know what I have wished for. Truly, this is why they gave up their own lives. Now I understand. It was too late, but thank goodness. As I have realized what I must do for the person I love.”

She laughed bitterly. She had on a smile that didn’t match her.

“Saehee.”

“Yes, Master.”

“I entrust these two to you.”

Saehee’s face froze.

“But Master. I.....”

“Since when were you able to talk back to me?”

Saehee bit her lip.

“Understood, Master.”

“I’m sorry, Sunghoon. Because of me, the person you, you like got hurt.”

“No, wait. Um, Rangii.”

I wanted to tell her something, apologize, say I was too harsh, that this isn’t your fault, that I know you did this all for me, but..... My mouth wouldn’t move. Rangii didn’t permit those words.

“I will not trouble you any longer. I will go back to my land.....”

The tears hanging near her eyes weren’t able to stay put any longer,

“The time I spent with you was the happiest..... of my life. Thank you, Sunghoon.”

And they fell.

“You absolutely need to be happy.”

Tears were falling.

And so, my first kiss was sweet, but at the same time it tasted salty.

“I love you, Sunghoon.”

Rangii spoke softly and smiled. A sad smile, like a farewell, that was tearing her heart apart. And then I realized. That Rangii was about to leave me, and that if I didn't grab her now, I might never see her again. I grabbed Rangii's hand and shouted.

“Wait, Rangii!”



But I only grabbed air. I was looking right at her a moment before, but she suddenly disappeared. My hand was without the feel of Rangii's hand and her warmth, and the reality of it left me in despair, and I could only smash the ground from my anger at myself.

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### Notes:

1. Rangii's speech pattern is copied here, which is supposed to be old Korean as spoken by a kid-- unfortunately, not very translatable.

↪

2. Spoken in English.

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3. An old proverb, meaning that the quietest ones are always the first to act, and are the most dangerous. ↪

4. An old proverb that actually goes "words in the day are heard by birds and words in the night are heard by mice," meaning that there will always be a listener no matter when and where you talk.

↪

5. Being a ghost is synonymous with being a mind reader in Korean. Saehee happens to be a ghost-like being who seemingly reads minds. ↪